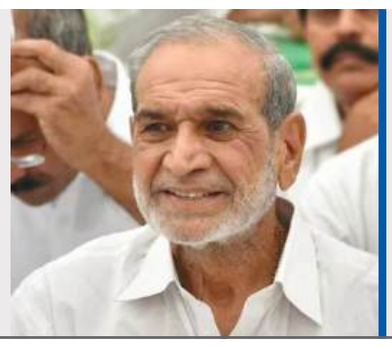
NATION

Ex-Congress MP acquitted in 1984 anti-Sikh riots case

≫ Page: 4 ≪



BUSINESS

Markets rebound after 3 straight days of falling

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

India aim to make it 2-0 against New Zealand

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 23 JANUARY 2026 | FRIDAY | BENGALURU | 3 SHABAN, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 20 | Pages: 8

Guv reads 3 lines in K'taka Assembly and walks out

Amid uproar, CM says Gehlot violated Constitutional duties

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot read only three lines of the State-prepared address that was to kick off the joint session of the legislature and walked out of the Assembly, refusing to read the rest. The high-drama session marks the third instance of a Governor facing off with the Opposition-ruled states after Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The Governor began the speech by greeting the Chief Minister, Assembly Speaker UT Khader, Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti, Leaders of the Opposition, Ministers, and members. He then added a few brief comments of his own and walked then out, triggering a fierce exchange between the ruling Congress and the Opposition BJP.

The Treasury Benches, including ministers such as HK Patil (Law and Parliamentary Affairs), stood up and requested Gehlot to complete the speech. As the Governor proceeded towards the exit door, some ruling legislators, including MLC BK Hariprasad, tried to gherao him. They were removed by the security staff.

The Congress had convened the joint session to discuss the new rural employment scheme VB-G RAM G, which replaced the MGNREGA.

However, Gehlot objected to the lines against the VB-G RAM G, among others.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reacted sharply, accusing the Governor of being a "puppet of the Centre".

"Every new year, the Governor has to address the joint session, and he has to read the speech prepared by the State Cabinet. That is Constitutional. Because Article 176 of the Constitution and Article 163 say he or she -- the Governor--shall read the speech prepared by the government or the cabinet," Siddaramaiah told reporters, referring to Article 176 and Article 163 of the Constitution.

"Today, instead of reading the speech prepared by the Cabinet, he delivered the speech prepared by himself. This is against the provisions of the Indian Constitution. It clearly violates articles 176 and 163. Therefore, it is not going to be the speech of the Governor," the Chief Minister said.

He said that the State was mulling whether to approach the Supreme Court. However, the BJP accused the Congress of misusing the floor of the house. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 2*

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot entered the Assembly at Vidhana Soudha cheerfully but left with a scowl after Congress leaders heckled him when he refused to read the Cabinet's speech ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

THE GUV'S CONTENTIOUS STANDOFF

Governor Gehlot objected to about 10 of the 122 paragraphs of the speech prepared by the State government. These were critical of the Centre's policies, most notably, against the VB-G RAM G act which replaced the MGNREGA. The State government called it the VB- Gram G in the speech. Gehlot was also to say the State suffered injustice in tax devolution and that the Centre deprived rural wage labourers, small farmers, and women of their rights to employment and unemployment allowance under the new scheme.

> **Today, instead of reading the speech prepared by the Cabinet, he delivered the speech prepared by himself. This is against the provisions of the Indian Constitution. It clearly violates Articles 176 and 163**
> -Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

EC assigns 'whistle' to Vijay, 'torch' to Kamal in TN polls

CHENNAI, 22 JAN

Ahead of Tamil Nadu's upcoming assembly elections, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has allotted symbols to veteran actors Vijay and Kamal Haasan. Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) received the 'whistle' symbol, while Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) was assigned the 'battery torch'. Haasan's party is allied with the ruling DMK, while Vijay's debut aims to unseat the DMK. The ECI confirmed the symbols' allocation, which are also available as "free symbols" for candidates in constituencies without party candidates. Parties risk losing symbols if they fail to secure at least 5% of the vote in their constituencies. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 3*

Adar Poonawalla to make a bid for RCB

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

The ownership transfer process of Royal Challengers Bengaluru gained momentum on Thursday as Adar Poonawalla said he will be tabling a "strong and competitive" bid for the IPL team. Royal Challengers are the defending IPL champions and, perhaps, have the biggest fan base among the 10 teams. Poonawalla is the Chief Executive Officer of Pune-based vaccine-maker Serum Institute of India. The bid will be made likely before IPL begins on 26 March. The effort to find a new owner for the $105 million worth RCB began last November by current owners United Spirits Ltd (USL), the Indian arm of global beverage major Diageo. —*PTI*

New MCD head emptied a stadium to walk a dog

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Sanjeev Khirwar, a 1994-batch IAS officer, has returned to Delhi as the new MCD Commissioner, announced by the Union Home Ministry and communicated to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena. In 2022, Khirwar was embroiled in controversy over allegedly asking athletes to leave a stadium early to walk his dog. His wife, Rinku Dugga, also a 1994-batch IAS officer, was reportedly compulsorily retired following the incident. Khirwar succeeds Ashwani Kumar, transferred to Jammu and Kashmir. Khirwar, an Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre officer, takes charge amid preparations for the upcoming. —*PTI*

The Bangladesh cricket team raised safety concerns after massive protests in India against the interim-government ***PHOTO: X***

Bangladesh refuses to play T20WC in India over 'safety'

DHAKA, 22 JAN

A defiant Bangladesh on Thursday refused to send its national cricket team for next month's T20 World Cup in India after the ICC rejected its demand for a change of venue, effectively paving the way for Scotland to take the country's place.

Bangladesh had requested to play at alternative venues, citing safety concerns as ties between New Delhi and Dhaka further deteriorated recently.

However, on Wednesday, the ICC issued an ultimatum, saying that there was no credible threat and asked Bangladesh to decide by Thursday.

After a meeting with national team players, Bangladesh's sports advisor Asif Nazrul announced that the ICC's assessment was not acceptable.

"While our cricketers have worked hard to qualify for the World Cup, the security risk regarding playing in India remains unchanged. This concern is not based on abstract analysis," Nazrul said in a press conference. "We are not giving up hope yet; our team is ready. We expect the ICC to provide justice by considering our genuine security risks and allowing us to play in Sri Lanka."

"Bangladesh is a populous, cricket-loving nation with nearly 200 million fans. If the ICC fails to accommodate us, it will be a significant loss for world cricket and a failure for the host country," he said.

The country raised security concerns after pacer Mustafizur Rahman was ousted from the IPL on BCCI's instructions for unspecified "developments all around." India was likely referring to an alleged increase in crimes against Hindus in Bangladesh.

Notably, Jay Shah, the son of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is the Chairman of the ICC. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 8*

Meitei man killed in Kuki area of Manipur

IMPHAL/ CHURACHANDPUR, 22 JAN

A Meitei man was abducted and shot dead in Kuki-majority Churachandpur district, triggering fresh tensions in Manipur, police said on Thursday.

The victim, Mayanglambam Rishikanta Singh, was abducted from his home in Tuibong on Wednesday and later killed near Natjang village. Police suspect the involvement of the United Kuki National Army, a non-signatory to the Suspension of Operations agreement with the Centre and the Manipur government.

Singh, a native of Kakching Khunou, was married to Chingnu Haokip of Churachandpur and had assumed the tribal name Ginminthang. He returned from Nepal on 19 January and was staying with his wife, local sources said.

His father said Singh and his wife were abducted by three armed men, but the woman was later pushed out of a moving vehicle.

Protests erupted in Kakching and parts of Imphal East, with demonstrators burning tyres and staging sitins. A video showing Singh pleading for his life before being shot surfaced online.

Police recovered the body Thursday, registered a suo motu case and launched a manhunt. Political leaders and civil society groups condemned the killing, demanding arrests. —*PTI*

Hindus, Muslims can pray at disputed Bhojshala in MP: SC

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Supreme Court on Thursday allowed Hindus to offer prayers from sunrise to sunset on Basant Panchami at the disputed Bhojshala–Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, while permitting Muslims to offer namaz between 1 pm and 3 pm on the same day. The court also directed that a list of persons from the Muslim community attending namaz be provided to the district administration in advance.

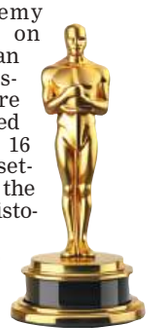
A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi urged both communities to maintain mutual respect and cooperate with authorities to ensure law and order. The bench directed the district administration to create separate spaces within the premises for Hindu and Muslim prayers, in line with past practice, and to make adequate security arrangements. Authorities were permitted to issue free passes or adopt other measures to prevent any untoward incident.

The Bhojshala complex, an ASI-protected 11th-century monument, is considered a Saraswati temple by Hindus and a mosque by Muslims. An ASI order of April 2003 allows Hindu puja on Tuesdays and Muslim namaz on Fridays.

The court was hearing a plea seeking exclusive Hindu worship rights on Basant Panchami, which coincides with a Friday this year. The apex court also maintained status quo at the site. —*PTI*

'Homebound' snubbed as 'Sinners' makes Oscar history

LOS ANGELES, 22 JAN



India's beloved 'Homebound' was not nominated for the 98th Academy Awards on Thursday, as Ryan Coogler's blues-steeped vampire epic 'Sinners' led all films with 16 nominations, setting a record for the most in Oscar history.

The previous record was 14 nominations, set by 'All About Eve', 'Titanic' and 'La La Land'.

Along with best picture, Coogler was nominated for best director and best screenplay, and double-duty star Michael B Jordan was rewarded with his first Oscar nomination for best actor.

Paul Thomas Anderson's father-daughter revolutionary saga 'One Battle After Another' trailed in second with 13, with four of its actors receiving nominations.

The best picture nominations were: 'Bugonia', 'F1', 'Frankenstein', 'Hamnet', 'Marty Supreme', 'One Battle After Another', 'The Secret Agent', 'Sentimental Value', 'Sinners' and 'Train Dreams.'

The Awards will take place on 15 March. Conan O'Brien will return as host. —*PTI*

>>>*More on Page 6*

10 soldiers killed, 11 injured in J&K accident

BHADERWAH/JAMMU, 22 JAN

An Army truck skidded off the road and plunged into a deep gorge in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, killing 10 soldiers and injuring 11 others, officials said.

The accident took place at the 9,000-foot-high Khanni top along Bhaderwah-Chamba interstate road around noon when the driver of the bullet-proof Army vehicle, Casspir, heading towards a high-altitude post lost control and the vehicle plunged into a 200-foot-deep gorge.

A joint rescue operation by Army and police was immediately launched and four of the soldiers were found dead on the spot and 11 others were rescued in an injured condition, the officials said. The Army vehicle was badly mangled after plunging down.

Later, six more injured soldiers succumbed to injuries.

One of the injured is under observation in Bhaderwah sub-district hospital while 10 soldiers were airlifted to Udhampur command hospital for specialised treatment while one is under observation in Bhaderwah Sub-district hospital.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has expressed grief over the accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply anguished" by the incident. —*PTI*

INDIA'S CARBON CREDIT PUSH — AT A GLANCE

INDIA EXPANDED ITS CARBON COMPLIANCE, ADDING MAJOR ENERGY-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES TO ITS EMISSION TRADING SYSTEM.

WHAT'S NEW?
- Emission intensity targets notified for 208 additional carbon-intensive units
- Covered under the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)

NEW SECTORS ADDED
- Petroleum refineries
- Petrochemicals
- Textiles
- Secondary aluminium

BIGGER PICTURE
- Earlier sectors: cement, aluminium, pulp & paper, chlor-alkali

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS
- Industries must meet Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity (GEI) targets
- Over-performers earn carbon credit certificates
- Credits can be traded with industries that fall short

WHY IT MATTERS
- Prices pollution
- Pushes cleaner industry
- Supports India's net-zero goals

TOTAL OBLIGATED ENTITIES NOW
490

MEXICO CITY TOPS LIST

B'luru now 2nd most congested city globally

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Bengaluru has been ranked the second most congested city globally in 2025, with an average congestion level of 74.4 per cent, Netherlands-based location technology firm TomTom said.

TomTom's 2025 Traffic Index placed Mexico City at the top, followed by Bengaluru and Dublin.

The index evaluates cities worldwide based on average travel times and congestion levels.

In Bengaluru, the average congestion level rose 1.7 percentage points compared to the previous year. Drivers covered an average distance of 4.2 km in 15 minutes, while a 10-km drive took an average of 36 minutes and nine seconds.

During peak hours, the average speed dropped to 13.9 kmph, the report added.

It identified 17 May as the city's worst travel day, with congestion levels peaking at 101 per cent. At 6 pm on that day, congestion surged to 183 per cent, reducing the distance covered in 15 minutes to just 2.5 km.

Six other Indian cities featured among the top 35 globally.

Pune ranked fifth with 71.1 per cent congestion, Mumbai (18th) at 63.2 per cent, New Delhi (23rd) at 60.2 per cent, Kolkata (29th) at 58.9 per cent, Jaipur (30th) at 58.7 per cent, and Chennai (32nd) at 58.6 per cent.

TomTom noted that the congestion levels, travel times, and speeds are based on anonymised trip data spanning more than 3.65 trillion km worldwide.

The data was collected over the year from drivers in large metropolitan and central city areas, covering the entire road network. —*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Cocaine worth Rs 38.6 cr seized, passenger held

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

A passenger arriving from Brazil's São Paulo was arrested at Kempegowda International Airport after customs officials seized cocaine worth Rs 38.60 crore from him. The passenger, whose identity has not been disclosed, was intercepted at Terminal 2 of the airport. "On 21 January, Bengaluru Customs officers at Kempegowda International Airport, Terminal 2, intercepted a passenger arriving from Sao Paulo and seized 7.72kg of cocaine valued at Rs 38.60 crore," Bengaluru Customs said in a post on 'X' on Thursday. The passenger has been arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, it added. Further investigation is underway. *—PTI*

ED attaches Rs 20 cr assets in MUDA case

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday said it has attached fresh assets worth over Rs 20 crore as part of the probe in the MUDA-linked money laundering case in Karnataka. Properties worth Rs 460 crore have been attached so far by the ED. The latest attachment includes 10 immovable properties including six "illegally" allotted sites of the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). The federal agency had arrested former MUDA commissioner GT Dinesh Kumar in 2025 on the charge of illegal allotment of MUDA sites. He is currently lodged in a jail under judicial custody. ED claimed its probe found routing and layering of "undue gratification" obtained by Kumar. Such proceeds of crime were used for purchasing immovable properties and construction of a commercial building in the name of his relatives. The case stems from an FIR filed by the Karnataka Lokayuktha police. *—PTI*

Cong mulls moving SC over Guv row

Ministers say BJP using Guv to insult CM

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday criticised Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot for refusing to deliver the customary address to the Assembly, calling the move a "violation of the Constitution" and stating that the government is examining whether to approach the Supreme Court over the matter.

The Chief Minister's remarks came after the Governor walked out of the Assembly session, declining to read the address prepared by the Council of Ministers and instead delivering a speech drafted by himself.

"He has not discharged his duties as per the Constitution. Therefore, we are going to protest against the attitude of the Governor," Siddaramaiah said.

Meanwhile, Congress leader BK Hariprasad, who attempted to stop the Governor at the assembly gate and demanded that he complete his address, accused the Governor of a constitutional breach and called it his "constitutional right to protest against him."

He said that the BJP was using Governors to "humiliate Chief Ministers"

"The Governor has no business to reject the speech by the Cabinet. According to the Constitution, the governor has to address the joint session upon the request of the Cabinet. The Governor rejected this, and hence we have the right to protest the breach of the Constitution," he said.

Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot, CM Siddaramaiahn, Basavaraj Horatti and HK Patil in front of Vidhana Soudha *-PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Law Minister HK Patil termed it "a black day in the history of democracy."

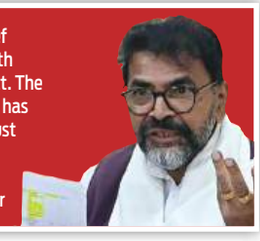
"A governor who is supposed to be the guardian of the Constitution has failed to do his duty…. He has insulted the Constitution. We will take an appropriate decision," Patil said.

"We want people's voices to be heard by the Centre and the nation at large through the Governor's speech," Patil added.

IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge accused the Governor of being biased and politically motivated, undermining the office's neutrality. "This is nothing but a partisan intervention that undermines the constitutional role and neutrality of the Governor's offices," he said. *—PTI*

> **First Tamil Nadu. Then Kerala. Now Karnataka. The pattern is clear and deliberate.... DMK will consult like-minded Opposition parties across India and pursue a constitutional amendment in the very next parliamentary session to abolish this obsolete and irrelevant practice**
>
> —MK Stalin, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

> The Constitution stipulates that Chief Ministers must address Governors with respect and bow to them with respect. The Congress thuggery, which was limited to the streets, has now entered the Vidhana Soudha. Siddaramaiah must immediately resign——Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, BJP leader
>
> —Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, BJP leader



BJP seeks action for attack on Guv

Says must act against those heckling Gehlot

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka on Thursday urged Speaker UT Khader to take strict action against those who allegedly blocked Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's way as he was departing the House.

The BJP leader was likely referring to MLC BK Hariprasad confronting Gehlot when the Governor was walking out of the Assembly. Hariprasad's robe was partially ripped during the ensuing scuffle. Congress members also raised slogans against Gehlot.

In a letter addressed to the Speaker, Ashoka said, "According to Rule-27 of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly's procedure and conduct… no member shall… interrupt or cause disruption to the Governor's address during the Governor's address."

Such interruption or be considered a serious breach of the order of the House, Ashoka noted, requesting disciplinary action against MLAs and MLCs.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, MLA BY Vijayendra and BJP MLAs during the legislative session at Vidhana Soudha *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

"The Governor acts as a bridge between the state and central governments," Ashoka also told press.

On X, Ashoka also attacked Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil. He said that Patil endorsed parliamentarians when they disrupted the Governor. "Patil has forfeited all moral authority to continue in that office even for a moment longer."

He called it a "black day" in Karnataka's legislative history.

Similarly, BJP State President BY Vijayendra defended Gehlot and accused the Congress of Congress of "misusing" the floor of the House to foster public resentment against the Centre.

"Let me remind Siddaramaiah that he is the chief minister of Karnataka state and not the Congress party. He should not lower the dignity of the gubernatorial post. He should also not lower the dignity of the house. It is his responsibility," he added.

Reacting to the governor's decision to read his own speech, Vijayendra said they cannot expect the governor to act like a puppet and follow their directions. *—Agencies*

RPSG to invest Rs 10,500 cr in Karnataka

DAVOS, 22 JAN

The RPSG Group will invest Rs 10,500 crore over the next three years in Karnataka's Vijayapura and Ballari districts, Large and Medium Industries Minister M B Patil said on Thursday, adding that the state government would extend full support to facilitate the investments. Patil, who is part of the Karnataka delegation at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, said the investments would strengthen the state's renewable energy and industrial ecosystem.

He said the InoxGFL Group, which has already started manufacturing wind turbine blades at Kustagi, plans to set up a facility to manufacture large wind power towers nearby.

The group has already invested Rs 10,000 crore in Karnataka. The Ramky Group has expressed interest in establishing Common Effluent Treatment Plants in KIADB industrial areas and has also discussed setting up a Pharma Park. Tech Mahindra has shown interest in making industrial investments in Tier-2 cities.

RPSG Group Shashwat Goenka and Minister MB Patil during the World Economic Forum in Davos *PHOTO: X @MBPATIL*

Patil said discussions were held with the Singapore Economic Development Board on setting up a 'Singapore Park' in Karnataka, with collaboration opportunities in semiconductors, biotechnology and aerospace. Lenovo discussed partnerships with local suppliers, while Axon Cables plans to expand manufacturing in India.

Schneider Electric announced plans to set up 20 additional training facilities in the state. The state also signed an MoU with Swiss Chambers India to strengthen industrial ties with Switzerland. *—PTI*

GTTC partners with Aus enterprise

The State-run GTTC signed an agreement with 'Workinitiatives', an Australian social enterprise on Thursday, to address Australia's critical skills shortages and create global career pathways for Karnataka's skilled workforce. This partnership will connect Karnataka's professionals, tradespeople and community workers with Australian employers, focusing on varied sectors. The MoU was signed by Siddalingappa Pujari, MD, Government Tool & Training Centre (GTTC) and Chris Carman, founder and CEO of Workinitiatives. *—PTI*

Farmer leader Maula Mulla M said that the government should present a separate budget for agriculture to address the problems *PHOTO: SALAR*

'Fix MSP for tur at Rs 12,500 per quintal'

KALABURAGI, 22 JAN

The Samyukta Horata Karnataka organisation began an overnight sit-in-protest (dharna) Kalaburagi city on Thursday, demanding that the government fix a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for tur dal at Rs 12,500 per quintal.

Farmers and farmer leaders gathered in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office in the city and launched the protest along with tractors and bullock carts.

Accusing the government of not listening to farmers, they also raised slogans including "Crop loss compensation must be given to farmers".

Addressing the gathering, leader Maula Mulla M said that the Central Government should present a separate budget for agriculture, just as it earlier presented a separate Railway Budget, and focus on resolving farmers' problems.

Noting that tur is a commercial crop in the region, he said that it still did not receive a special price. "Officials claim that a 25 per cent additional price is being given for Geographical Indication-tagged (GI) tur, but the ground reality is different. Politicians claim that they are sons of farmers, but in reality they are working for industrialists."

Leader Sharanabasappa Mamashetti said that both the Central and State governments should separately release an incentive of Rs 1,000 each per quintal above the demanded MSP.

Leader Bhimashankar Madiyal said both Congress and the BJP are anti-farmer parties. *—Salar News*

ENERGY MEET

Bihar Rural Development Minister Shravan Kumar meets Karnataka Bioenergy Board Chairman SE Sudheendra to discuss upgradation of the bioenergy sector *PHOTO: SALAR*

2 homeowners booked for manual scavenging in Haveri

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Police on Thursday said that two daily wage labourers from Koosanoor village of Hanagal taluk in Haveri district were made to descend into a septic tank to clean it. They were forced to carry the collected human waste on their heads. The incident came to light on Thursday, when a passerby recorded the entire episode on a mobile phone and circulated the video on social media, leading to widespread outrage.

Speaking to Salar News, Hangal Taluk Tahasildar Renuka S admitted that the two daily wage labourers were brought from Hirekerur taluk to clean the septic tanks of houses belonging to Suresh Pujar and Basavaraj Pujar in Koosanoor village, which had not been cleaned for over six years.

"On Tuesday afternoon, the two men were made to enter the pit without any safety equipment. The two men had been lured into doing this work by offering higher wages," Renuka said.

Police Sub-Inspector Sharanappa told Salar News that a case was registered against the accused in the incident at the Adoor Police Station under suitable provisions. *—Salar News*

SINGAPORE'S 'TREE LADY' FROM K'TAKA DIES AT 66

SINGAPORE, 22 JAN

Kirtida Mekani, originally from the State and one of Singapore's most influential champions of environmental sustainability, community service and cultural heritage, has passed away at the age of 66 after suffering a massive heart attack at home.

A recipient of the President's Award for environmental work and inducted into the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in 2024, Mekani's legacy is woven into the island's green spaces, community gardens, educational institutions and cultural landmarks, reported online tabloid tabla!

The sudden passing of the "Tree Lady" on 19 January has left a profound void in Singapore's environment, arts and civic communities, which she shaped quietly yet decisively for over three decades.

Her husband Bharat Mekani told the tabloid, "Kirtida lived with a rare kindness and an unwavering sense of purpose." SIFAS President KV Rao added, "Kirtida was a truly remarkable individual who endeared herself to everyone with her innate empathy for all living beings and the environment."

Mekani's proudest achievement was the Plant-A-Tree Programme, launched in 2007, which has planted over 76,000 trees, introduced more than 200 native species and engaged over 1,00,000 participants in the plantation drive. *—PTI*

KIA staffer held for 'harassing' Korean woman

BENGALURU, 22 JAN

Police on Thursday said they arrested Mohammed Affan Ahamed, 25, in connection with the alleged sexual harassment of a South Korean national at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru during a security check on 19 January.

The incident occurred at Terminal 2 while the woman was completing her immigration formalities before boarding a flight to South Korea.

The woman alleged that the staffer claimed a beeping sound was coming from her bag and persuaded her to move to a secluded spot near the men's washroom.

Recalling the incident in an interview with a South Korean television channel, the woman said the staffer approached her professionally, citing protocol. On the pretext of conducting a manual frisk, he touched her *—PTI*

UNMET DEMANDS

Demanding that salaries be paid by the 5th of every month and an increase in honorarium, members of Karnataka State Grama Kayaka Mitra Employees Association stage a protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Thursday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

DEVOTEES IN DESPAIR

No trekking in MM Hills post leopard attack

MYSURU, 22 JAN

The Chamarajanagar district administration banned trekking along the forest route to the Male Mahadeshwara temple at MM Hills in the district after a pilgrim was mauled to death by a leopard earlier this week.

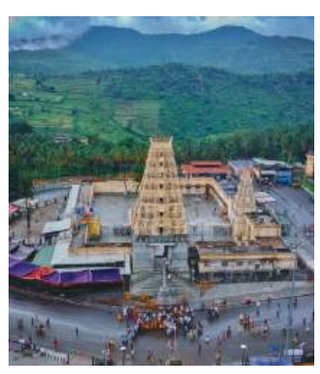
Chamarajanagar Additional Deputy Commissioner T Javaregowda on Thursday said the bans included two-wheelers, trekking and climbing the steps to temple until further orders or until the leopard is captured.

With major festivals such as Shivaratri and Ugadi approaching, officials said the movement of large numbers of devotees could hamper leopard capture operations and pose safety risks, prompting the temporary ban.

The decision was made based on the recommendations of the Deputy Conservator of Forests of Kollegal and MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary.

However, devotees expressed their disappointment. Every year about 30 to 40 lakh devotees undertake the pilgrimage to the Male Mahadeshwara temple. The temple also generates the second highest muzrai in the State safter the Kukke Subramanya temple in Dakshina Kannada.

A large number of devotees from Chamarajanagar, Mandya, Mysure, Bengaluru Rural and several other districts go to the temple by undertaking a padayatra through thick jungles. *—PTI*



M'rashtra cops seek Belagavi cops' help in Rs 400 cr robbery

BELAGAVI, 22 JAN

The Maharashtra police has sought the assistance of the Belagavi police in connection with a robbery involving defunct Rs 2,000 denomination currency notes worth approximately Rs 400 crore.

Sandeep Patil filed a complaint with the Nasik police in January about the consignment of defunct Rs 2,000 notes being transported in containers from Maharashtra to Goa via the Chorla Ghat road in Khanapur taluk in Belagavi district on 22 October, 2024.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the perpetrators may have threatened those transporting the consignment, who might have handed over the currency without resistance. Police officials noted that no physical altercation was reported during the incident.

The Chorla Ghat route is the shortest and fastest link between Belagavi and Goa and witnesses heavy vehicular movement round the clock. .

Police said had the Nashik police shared complete information provided by the complainant, it would have helped in conducting the probe better. Further investigations are underway. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

Operation Trashi-I: Fresh encounter breaks out in J&K

JAMMU, 22 JAN

A fresh gunfight has erupted between security forces and terrorists in the dense forests of Singhpora, Kishtwar district. The operation Trashi-I, launched in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpora on Sunday, resulted in one paratrooper dead and seven soldiers injured. The encounter resumed this morning, with heavy firing ongoing. A major terrorist hideout was uncovered nearby on Monday, and several individuals were detained for questioning. Officials believe two to three terrorists, linked to Pakistan-based JeM, are trapped. The operation continues as forces aim to neutralise the terrorists operating in the area, with efforts ongoing to restore control. *—PTI*

Didi write poems about 110 killed by SIR anxiety

KOLKATA, 22 JAN

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday claimed that at least 110 people have died because of stress and panic over the SIR exercise in the state so far. Inaugurating the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair here, she said that her 162nd book, a compilation of 26 poems on the agony faced by people due to the SIR, will come out in this edition of the fair. Scores of people, including elderly ones, have to line up at Special Intensive Revision (SIR) camps for hearing, and wait for five-six hours in the open every day, Banerjee said.Had Rabindranath Tagore been around, probably he would have faced the same situation now, Banerjee said. *—PTI*

CEC launches new EC platform

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Thursday launched a new digital interface for voters, officials and political parties, describing it as a tool to counter misinformation. The ECINET will integrate over 40 of its existing mobile and web applications and provide a singular platform for all electoral-related activities. The platform will reduce the burden on users from downloading and navigating multiple apps and remembering different logins. The ECINET will also enable users to access relevant data on their desktops or smartphones. To ensure that data is as accurate as possible, data on ECINET will be entered by authorised EC official. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Women Agniveer to join IAF band at R-Day parade

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

For the first time, nine women Agniveer will be part of the Indian Air Force band at the Republic Day parade. The band, led by Sergeant Charles Antony Daniel, will perform during the march on Kartavya Path. Flt Lt Akshita Dhankar will unfurl the national flag with President Droupadi Murmu. The 144-member contingent will include 66 Agniveer, nine of whom are women. The band will perform tunes like 'Nidar Yodha' and 'Sare Jahan Se Achha', before and after the parade. Sqn Ldr Jagdesh Kumar, a first-time participant, expressed pride in representing his service. This year's theme celebrates the sesquicentenary of 'Vande Mataram', with a special flypast featuring 29 aircraft. *—PTI*

Mumbai to have woman mayor from General category

Opposition alleges that the lottery is 'fixed' to suit the ruling parties

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

Mumbai's next mayor will be a woman from the General category, as determined by a lottery held on Thursday, an official said, even as the Opposition alleged the procedure was "fixed" to suit the ruling parties.

The Shiv Sena (UBT)'s hopes of securing the Mumbai mayoral post were dashed after the lottery draw, as it had pinned its chances on the possibility of the post being reserved for a Scheduled Tribe (ST) woman, as both eligible candidates in that category belonged to Uddhav Thackeray's party.

In the 15 January elections, the BJP won 89 seats in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), while the Shiv Sena led by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde secured 29, taking the alliance past the halfway mark of 114 required to control India's largest and richest civic body.

As per the draw of lots, eight other civic bodies in Maharashtra — Pune, Dhule, Nanded-Waghala, Navi Mumbai, Malegaon, Mira-Bhayander, Nagpur and Nashik — will also have women mayors from the general category.

The lottery determines the category for which the mayor's post will be reserved, such as general, women, SC, ST, and OBC categories. Once the category is announced, eligible candidates file their nominations.

However, Minister of State for Urban Development, Madhuri Misal, rejected the charge.

Elected candidates from Shiv Sena UBT along with their former Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar, at Shiv Sena Bhavan, in Mumbai *PHOTO: ANI*

> After fighting the 2019 assembly polls together, Uddhav Thackeray betrayed Devendra Fadnavis for the chief minister's post, and he is now getting the fruits of that betrayal in Kalyan
>
>
>
> -Navnath Ban, Maharashtra BJP Media in Charge

"We completed the procedure as per the law," she asserted.

Additionally, the Mahayuti will have its mayor in the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation, Maharashtra BJP chief Ravindra Chavan has asserted, amid suspense over political realignments as five MNS corporators offered support to BJP's ally Shiv Sena in the civic body. *—PTI*

BJP, AIMIM, Cong join hands in Achalpur councils

NAGPUR, 22 JAN

The BJP, AIMIM and Congress came together in the Achalpur Municipal Council in Maharashtra's Amravati district to ensure unopposed election of various committee chairpersons.

This development comes days after the BJP forged partnerships with the Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen and Congress in Akot and Ambernath local bodies, respectively.

In the Achalpur local body elections, the Congress won 15 seats, BJP won nine, AIMIM won three, the independents won 10, Prahar Janshakti Party and NCP won two each. *—PTI*

Sabarimala row rocks Kerala Assembly proceedings

T'PURAM, 22 JAN

The Congress-led UDF on Thursday disrupted the Kerala Assembly proceedings by demanding the resignation of state Devaswom Minister VN Vasavan over the Sabarimala gold loss issue.

The ruling LDF hit back, alleging that Sonia Gandhi was involved in the Sabarimala gold loss issue and demanded that she be arrested and interrogated in the case.

Speaker AN Shamseer told the Opposition that creating a ruckus in the assembly without moving a notice to adjourn the House to discuss the issue was "not the correct way."

On Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan suggestion, the Speaker adjourned the assembly for the day. The next session will convene on 27 January.

State Parliamentary Affairs Minister MB Rajesh accused the opposition of being "cowards".

Both the ruling and opposition front MLAs came outside the legislative complex and hurled accusations against each other in connection with the House proceedings.

The LDF MLAs reiterated the same accusations that they had raised in the House proceedings.

The UDF MLAs reiterated their allegations that Vasavan had a role in the loss of gold. *—PTI*

Union Minister Piyush Goyal meets AIADMK General Secretary Edapaddi K Palaniswami and others in Chennai, on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

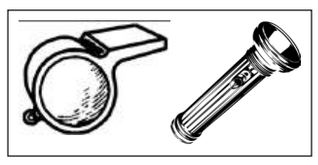
EC allots 'Whistle' for Vijay, 'battery torch' for Kamal Haasan

CHENNAI, 22 JAN

Ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, the political parties of veteran actors Vijay and Kamal Haasan have been allotted their respective symbols by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The whistle symbol has been allotted to Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), headed by actor Vijay, whereas, the battery torch symbol has been allotted to Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM).

Haasan's MNM has an alliance with the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), while Vijay's TVK is set to debut in the upcoming assembly polls, vying to gain power by unseating the incumbent DMK.



The symbols are also available for allotment as "free symbol" to other candidates in the constituencies where the parties do not actually set up their candidates.

Moreover, the parties could also lose their symbols if they do not meet the requirement of a minimum number of candidates, that is, winning in 5 per cent of the total Assembly constituencies.

All the political parties have started gearing up for the elections, with AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami already announcing the party's first phase of poll promises on 17 January.

Vijay is being questioned by the Central Bureau of Investigation regarding the Karur stampede.

Tamil Nadu is scheduled to hold elections in the first half of this year. *—ANI*

Goyal meets Palaniswami, says NDA will win in TN

CHENNAI, 22 JAN

BJP Tamil Nadu election in-charge Piyush Goyal on Thursday said the AIADMK-led NDA would come to power in the April Assembly elections and transform the State through infrastructure development and good governance.

After a breakfast meeting with AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, Goyal said the alliance would end the "corrupt and dynasty rule" of the DMK and restore Tamil Nadu's glory.

Palaniswami said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at Madurathakam near Chennai on 23 January would be a turning point, paving the way for the defeat of the "corrupt DMK regime".

The meeting at Palaniswami's Greenways Road residence was aimed at giving final shape to the NDA ahead of Modi's campaign launch.The AIADMK leads the NDA in Tamil Nadu, with the BJP, PMK (Anbumani faction), AMMK and GK Vasan-led Tamil Maanila Congress among its constituents.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive from Thiruvananthapuram, travel by helicopter to Madurathakam and address the rally at 3pm before departing for Delhi the same evening.

Modi will arrive from Thiruvananthapuram, travel by helicopter to Madurathakam and address the rally at 3pm before departing for Delhi the same evening.

Around five lakh people are expected to attend. *—PTI*

RaGa urges poor to unite & save MGNREGA

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday urged workers to unite against the Modi government's repeal of MGNREGA, drawing parallels with the farmers' successful protest against the "three black farm laws."

Speaking at the National MGNREGA Workers' Convention organised by Rachnatmak Congress, Gandhi said, "The MGNREGA movement is a big opportunity for poor people who believe in the Constitution. If they stand together, Modi ji will back off and MGNREGA would be reinstated."

Workers brought soil from work sites, placed in plants as a symbolic gesture. Gandhi alleged that the government is concentrating wealth among the rich and reducing workers' rights.

Additionally, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge claimed the repeal was a "conspiracy to erase Mahatma Gandhi's name" and turn the rural poor into "bonded labourers."

> He (Modi) says 'I am a chaiwala' only to garner votes. Have you (Modi) ever made tea and moved around inside train compartments with a kettle of tea.
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress Chief

He criticised the government for restricting workdays and imposing digital measures that exclude labourers.

The party's 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' campaign, launched on 10 January, demands withdrawal of the VB-G RAM G Act and full restoration of MGNREGA. *—PTI*

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge during the National MGNREGA Workers' Convention in New Delhi, on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

SANATANA DHARMA ROW

DMK flays 'wrong' judgement, says no place for judge's beliefs

CHENNAI, 22 JAN

The ruling DMK on Thursday described a Madras High Court judgement on the 'Sanatana Dharma' row involving its leader Udhayanidhi Stalin as "wrong," and said the personal belief of the judge has no place in the judgment.

Responding to the Madurai Bench of the HC quashing an FIR against BJP IT cell Chief Amit Malviya, DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai said the "judgment is wrong."

"It does not adhere to a cardinal principle in jurisprudence. Audi Alteram Partem (which means) nobody should be condemned unheard."

"The personal belief or ideology of the judge should not find a place in the judgment," he said, responding to Union Minister Piyush Goyal's social media post calling the HC ruling "a strong rebuke to the DMK's narrow, anti Hindu mindset."

Annadurai denied that DMK was anti-Hindu.

"The most erroneous part is that DK and DMK had acted against Hinduism in the last 100 years. There is nothing that is far from the truth in this assertion of the judgment. DMK is the party which ensured 69 per cent reservation for the Hindus. How can this be against Hinduism. This can be viewed as against Hinduism only if you oppose reservation. And you cannot oppose reservation, as it's guaranteed by the Constitution," he added.

The HC had quashed the FIR registered against BJP leader Malviya for allegedly distorting the comments made by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on "Sanatana Dharma", wondering why those initiating "hate speech" were allowed to go scot-free while those reacting to it had to face the law. *—PTI*

BJP IT cell Chief Amit Malviya; DMK DyCM Udhayanidhi Stalin *PHOTO: PTI*

Maoist with ₹2.35 cr bounty among 16 killed in J'khand

CHAIBASA, 22 JAN

Sixteen Maoists, including top leader Anal Da, were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Thursday.

Anal Da, wanted in 149 Maoist related cases, was carrying a bounty of Rs 2.35 crore on his head, comprising Rs 1 crore by Jharkhand government, Rs 1.2 crore (Odisha government) and Rs 15 lakh by the NIA.

Among the 16 that were kille, five of them were women. Around 1,500 personnel of the CRPF's CoBRA unit were engaged in the operation in Kumdi area of Saranda forest, which is one of the biggest anti-Maoist drives in the state.

Barring Misir Besra, all central committee members of CPI (Maoists) have been killed in Jharkhand, IG CRPF Saket Kumar Singh said.

Now only 60-65 Maoists are left in Singhbhum.

Singh urged the Maoists to surrender before the security forces or else to be ready to face consequences.

Other Maoists killed include regional committee member Amit Munda, sub-zonal committee members Pintu Lohar and Laljeet alias Lalu and area committee members Rajesh Munda, Bulbul Alda, Babita and Purnima.

A huge quantity of arms and ammunition has also been recovered.

Additionally, Union Home Minister Amit Shah in a post on X on Thursday said that "Today, in West Singhbhum, the ongoing joint operation by CRPF and Jharkhand Police has achieved a major success in the campaign to make the region free of Naxals, with the neutralisation of the notorious bounty-wanted Naxal Central Committee member 'Anal alias Patiram Manjhi'... and 15 other Naxals so far," Shah posted on X.

He appealed to the remaining Maoists to abandon their ideology that connects to violence, terror and arms, and join the mainstream of development and trust.

"We are committed to eradicating Naxalism, which has been synonymous to fear and terror for decades, before 31 March, 2026," he said. *—PTI*

Kejriwal acquited in case over skipping ED summons

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

A court on Thursday acquitted former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in two cases linked to the alleged non-compliance of summons issued to him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Delhi Excise policy case.

The court refused to consider email service a valid or legal method of serving summons.

The court held that the ED failed to prove that the summons was served properly.

The court also acquitted AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan in one such case and discharged him in another similar matter linked with the investigation of the Delhi Waqf Board money laundering case.

ED had filed four complaints against Kejriwal and Amanatullah Khan in 2024, alleging that they avoided the summons issued to them to join the investigation in the respective cases.

The court also said that the complainant had failed to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt. *—ANI*

PHOTO: ANI

Violence-hit Kokrajhar in Assam returns to normalcy

GUWAHATI, 22 JAN

The violence-hit Kokrajhar district of Assam showed signs of returning to normalcy on Thursday, with the Army, CRPF and Assam Police patrolling sensitive areas, officials said. No fresh violence has been reported since Tuesday evening. Clashes between Bodo and Adivasi communities left two people dead earlier this week. The unrest was triggered on Monday night when a vehicle carrying three Bodos hit two Adivasis in the Karigaon area, following which the occupants were allegedly assaulted and the vehicle set ablaze. Four Army columns have been deployed. Over 1,000 people remain in relief camps in five schools. Prohibitory orders under BNSS 163 and internet suspension continue in Kokrajhar and Chirang district. *—PTI*

MACT awards Rs 1 cr compensation to family of UP cop

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

A tribunal here has awarded Rs 1 crore as compensation to the family of a Uttar Pradesh police constable who died in a road accident in Aligarh in 2024. The tribunal noted the offending vehicle was duly insured and the insurance company failed to establish any statutory defence. The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal was hearing a petition filed by the wife, parents and minor children of the deceased, Dinesh Kumar. On 13 January, 2024, Kumar was on his way back from work when a rashly driven car hit his motorcycle from behind on Mathura Bypass Flyover. The sole bread earner of his family, he was declared brought dead in a hospital. *—PTI*

Steel plant blast in Chh'garh leaves 6 dead, 5 injured

BALODABAZAR, 22 JAN

Six workers were killed and five injured after hot ash fell on them following an explosion at a steel plant in the Balodabazar-Bhatapara district of Chhattisgarh on Thursday, officials said. The blast occurred at 9.40am at Real Ispat and Power Ltd in Bakulahi village, collector Deepak Soni said. Preliminary findings suggest a dust settling chamber linked to a kiln leaked after the explosion, causing ash to rain on workers. Six died on the spot, while the injured were admitted to the Chhattisgarh Institute of Medical Sciences in Bilaspur. The area was sealed and a probe team led by the sub-divisional magistrate formed. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Three killed as tyre burst engulfs Nellore-Hyd bus

TIRUPATI, 21 JAN

Three people were charred to death and over 15 injured after a travel bus caught fire in a crash on the Nellore–Hyderabad National Highway near Sirivellametta in Nandyal district on Wednesday. The AR BCVR Travels bus suffered a tyre burst, lost control, crossed the median and rammed into an oncoming lorry, police said. The impact triggered a blaze, killing the bus driver, the lorry driver and a cleaner on the spot. Panicked passengers tried to escape as flames spread. A local mini-van driver smashed windows and helped passengers flee. The injured were shifted to Nandyal Government Hospital. SP Suneel Sheoran inspected the site, while minister Janardhan Reddy offered condolences. *—PTI*

Ex-Congress MP acquitted in 1984 anti-Sikh riots case

Witnesses failed to name accused, says court

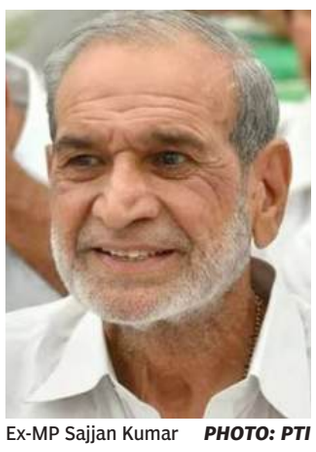
NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

A Delhi court on Thursday acquitted former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a case related to incitement of violence in Janakpuri during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, citing insufficient evidence to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubt.

Kumar has been in jail since 2018 after receiving life imprisonment in other riot-related murder cases.

Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh noted that most prosecution witnesses relied on hearsay or delayed identification. Many failed to name Kumar for over three decades. "Relying on the identification of the accused by such witnesses would be risky and may lead to a travesty," the judge said.

The court highlighted that complainant Harvinder Singh, whose affidavit and 1991 statement were central to the case, did not name Kumar. Witnesses, despite knowing Kumar as a prominent local politician, offered no plausible explanation for the decades-long delay. The court stressed that prior convictions or similar offences could not lower the standard of proof required in this trial.



Ex-MP Sajjan Kumar **PHOTO: PTI**

- Special Judge Dig Vinay Singh noted that most prosecution witnesses relied on hearsay or delayed identification. Many failed to name Kumar for over three decades

"While the trauma suffered by victims and their families is well understood, that cannot come in the way of a decision sans emotions," the judge added. Kumar appeared via video conferencing, as Republic Day arrangements prevented his physical production.

Outside the court, relatives of riot victims expressed grief and dismay. Pappi Kaur, a 70-year-old widow, said, "I attended each hearing against Sajjan Kumar. I hoped he would be severely punished. This verdict has shattered me." Complainant counsel Maninder Singh indicated plans to challenge the order in the Delhi High Court after studying the judgment.

The court also dismissed arguments relying on fear of Kumar's political influence. It noted that his arrest and media coverage in other cases would have addressed any purported fear factor. Without credible eyewitness identification or evidence of presence at the crime scene, Kumar was acquitted of all charges. *—PTI*

RED FORT BLAST CASE

SC notice to Delhi over LeT terrorist's death penalty plea

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear the curative petition filed by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorist Mohammad Arif, also known as Ashfaq, challenging the death penalty awarded to him in the 2000 Red Fort attack case that killed three Army jawans.

A special bench comprising CJI Surya Kant and others issued notice to the Delhi government after taking note of submissions citing later apex court judgments. "Issue notice," the Chief Justice said.

The curative petition is the final judicial remedy available to a convict after the Supreme Court has dismissed both the appeal and the review petition.

Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militant Mohammed Arif alias Ashfaq in police custody **PHOTO: PTI**

Arif's review plea was rejected on 3 November, 2022. Earlier, a trial court had sentenced him to death in October 2005, a verdict upheld by the Delhi High Court in September 2007. In August 2011, the Supreme Court affirmed the death sentence while dismissing his appeal against the high court ruling.

According to the prosecution, on the night of 22 December, 2000, intruders entered the Red Fort complex in Delhi, where a unit of the 7 Rajputana Rifles of the Indian Army was stationed, and opened fire.

Three Army personnel were killed in the terror attack, which was later attributed to the Pakistan-based LeT. The matter will now be examined by the court under curative jurisdiction rules. *—PTI*

EC TERMS SIR FAIR, URGES SC TO REJECT PLEAS AGAINST IT

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The Election Commission on Thursday defended the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls as "fair, just and reasonable", urging the Supreme Court to dismiss pleas challenging the exercise in Bihar.

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the poll panel, said a "roving and fishing enquiry" could not be ordered at the behest of NGOs or politicians, noting that none of the 66 lakh voters deleted during Bihar's SIR had approached courts or the Commission.

Dwivedi told a bench of CJI Surya Kant and others that SIR was a lawful exercise of powers under Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, distinct from routine revisions under Section 21(2). He argued the procedure was discretionary, conducted after nearly two decades, and reflected demographic changes such as urbanisation and population movement.

Citing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003, Dwivedi said stricter citizenship norms justified scrutiny. Justice Bagchi questioned whether citizenship issues triggered the SIR, observing migration could be lawful. Dwivedi replied the exercise examined citizenship only within Article 326.

He said Booth Level Agents conducted house-to-house verification, over five crore SMS alerts were sent, most voters needed no documents, and others could submit any of 11 proofs. *—PTI*

SC refuses to give omnibus stampede guidelines

The SC on Thursday refused to issue omnibus directions on stampede prevention, declining a PIL seeking nationwide crowd-management SOPs. A bench led by CJI Surya Kant said policy formulation lay with executive authorities and allowed the petitioner to pursue representations before the Union home ministry and EC. - PTI

SC bins plea over BCCI being called Team India

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed as frivolous a plea seeking to bar Prasar Bharati from calling the BCCI cricket team "Team India". Upholding the Delhi High Court order, a bench led by CJI Surya Kant said such petitions waste judicial time and rejected claims of misrepresentation entirely outright. - PTI

Noida techie death: 2 more builders held

NOIDA, 22 JAN

The Noida police on Thursday arrested two more builders in connection with the death of a software engineer who drowned after his car fell into a waterlogged trench in Sector 150, officials said. Those arrested were identified as Ravi Bansal and Sachin Karnwal.

Yuvraj Mehta, 27, who worked in Gurugram, was returning home on the intervening night of 16–17 January when his vehicle plunged into a water-filled pit near a construction site. He died after reportedly pleading for help for nearly two hours.

An FIR was registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections following a complaint by his father. Police had earlier arrested Abhay Kumar, director of MZ Wiztown Planners.

A separate FIR has since been lodged against five builders of Lotus Greens Construction and MZ Wiztown Planners for alleged violations of environmental and pollution laws. Investigators found a large, unfenced pit that had remained waterlogged for years, posing a public hazard. A State-constituted SIT is probing the case.

Meanwhile, the National Green Tribunal took suo motu cognisance, flagging lapses in stormwater management and alleged inaction by the Noida Authority, and sought responses from multiple agencies. *—PTI*

Goa nightclub fire: Ex-sarpanch surrenders after bail

PANAJI, 22 JAN

Former Arpora-Nagoa sarpanch Roshan Redkar surrendered before a Mapusa court on Thursday in connection with the 6 December fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Goa that killed 25 people. He appeared before a Judicial Magistrate First Class a day after the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court dismissed his anticipatory bail plea.

Redkar was booked by Anjuna police along with others, including panchayat secretary Raghuvir Bagkar, for allegedly facilitating licences for the nightclub. His pre-arrest bail plea was earlier rejected by a district court.

The Directorate of Panchayat has disqualified Redkar. Bagkar has been arrested. Redkar faces BNS charges. Police have arrested nine accused so far. *—PTI*

Woman kills hubby with lover, then watches porn

GUNTUR, 22 JAN

A woman in Andhra Pradesh has been arrested for allegedly killing her husband with the help of her lover and trying to pass it off as a heart attack, police said on Friday. The incident occurred in Chiluvuru village of Guntur district.

Police identified the accused as Lakshmi Madhuri and the victim as her husband, Lokam Shiva Nagaraju, an onion trader. Investigators said Madhuri planned the murder with her lover, Gopi, and fed Nagaraju biryani mixed with a substance that made him fall into deep sleep.

Around 11.30 pm, Gopi arrived at the house and sat on the victim's chest while Madhuri smothered him with a pillow, killing him on the spot. Gopi then left, while Madhuri stayed in the house through the night, watching pornographic videos beside the body, police said.

On Friday morning, she told neighbours that her husband had died of a heart attack. Suspicious neighbours alerted the family and police after noticing visible injuries.

A post-mortem confirmed death due to suffocation and chest fractures. Madhuri confessed during questioning. A case was registered against the accused and investigation is underway. *—Agencies*

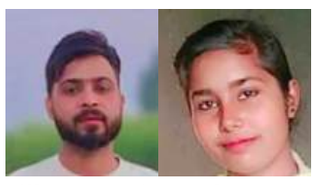
INTERFAITH UP COUPLE FOUND BURIED; HONOUR KILLING SUSPECTED

MORADABAD, 22 JAN

A young interfaith couple missing for three days were found dead and buried in a field in UP, in what police suspect is an honour killing.

The bodies of Kajal, a student, and her partner Arman, both in their twenties, were recovered on Wednesday night from a pit near the Neem Karoli Baba temple on the banks of the Gagan river, Senior SP Satpal Antil said.

The couple had been in a relationship for nearly two years. Police said the killings occurred on the night of 18 January after members of the woman's family allegedly caught the pair together at her home in Umri Sabjipur village. "During probe, suspicion fell on the woman's family members.



After sustained questioning, Kajal's brothers confessed to killing both in a fit of rage and burying the bodies to destroy evidence," Antil said.

Two brothers are in custody and a third is being questioned. An FIR was filed on Arman's father's complaint. The recovery was conducted before a magistrate. *—PTI*

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams opens Kerala Literature Festival

KOZHIKODE, 22 JAN

Noted NASA astronaut Sunita Williams inaugurated the ninth edition of the the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF) on Kozhikode Beach on Thursday.

She called the literary event a place where all the As, astronauts, authors and artists, come together.

Williams arrived in Kozhikode on Wednesday night and will participate in various events until 25 January. She is scheduled to attend the inaugural on Thursday evening with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Other speakers include Kerala Tourism Minister PA Muhammad Riyas, TN Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan, poet K Satchidanandan, actress Bhavana, actor Prakash Raj, Nirmala Lakshman, Chairperson of The Hindu Group, bureaucrat Divya S Iyer, German Consul General Achim Burkart, Dr Marla Stukenberg, Dr Sayed Ibrahim and A Pradeepkumar.

Later, she will speak at 'Dreams Reach Orbit', moderated by Preeti Choudhry. On Friday, she will join 'Once Upon a Time in Space', moderated by Rima Kallingal.

On 25 January, she will participate in 'Astronaut's Odyssey' with Barkha Dutt and 'When Earth Can't Keep You Down'. *—Agencies*

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams interacts with PTI at the Kerala Literature Festival, in Kozhikode, Kerala **PHOTO: PTI**

Girl selling roses kidnapped, raped in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

An 11-year-old girl selling roses at a Delhi traffic signal was kidnapped and raped on 11 January, police said Thursday.

The accused, e-rickshaw driver Durgesh, 40, lured her in Prasad Nagar by promising to help sell her flowers.

He took her to a forest near Professor Ram Nath Vij Marg, assaulted her, and fled after leaving her unconscious. The girl regained consciousness and returned to her family, who rushed her to a hospital.

Investigators scanned footage from nearly 300 CCTV cameras across 15 routes. They identified Durgesh's vehicle from a clip showing the girl boarding it, leading to his arrest that same day.

During interrogation, Durgesh confessed to having previously noticed the girl and planning the crime. Police recovered blood-stained clothes based on his disclosure.

A case under kidnapping, rape, and the POCSO Act has been registered. The victim is undergoing treatment and counselling. Further probe is ongoing. *—PTI*

CLAIM FOR RETD IAF OFFICER

Calling hypertension as lifestyle ailment can't block pension: HC

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Describing primary hypertension as a "lifestyle disorder" is insufficient to deny disability pension to a retired Indian Air Force officer, the Delhi High Court has held, dismissing the Centre's challenge to an Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT) order granting pensionary relief.

A division bench of Justices V Kameswar Rao and Manmeet PS Arora said lifestyle varies from individual to individual and the medical board is obligated to record clear reasons after examining the person concerned.

"A mere statement that the disease is a lifestyle disorder cannot be a sufficient reason to deny the grant of disability pension unless the medical board has duly examined and recorded the particulars relevant to the individual concerned," the bench said in its judgment dated 19 January.

The court upheld the AFT's 3 August, 2023 order directing grant of the disability element of pension for primary hypertension assessed at 30 per cent and broad-banded to 50 per cent. The officer joined the IAF in October 1981 and was discharged in March 2019 after over 37 years of service, having been placed in a low medical category.

The Union government argued that the ailment arose in a peace area and was neither attributable to nor aggravated by service, relying on the medical board's opinion that hypertension was an "idiopathic/lifestyle-related disorder". Rejecting the plea, the High Court noted it was undisputed that the officer had no disability at enrolment and that the medical board failed to give cogent reasons linking the condition to lifestyle or excluding service attribution. *—Agencies*

Four detained for assaulting Odisha pastor

BHUBANESHWAR, 22 JAN

Four people have been detained in the Dhenkanal district of Odisha for allegedly assaulting a man over accusations of religious conversion, police said on Thursday.

The action followed a complaint by the victim's wife, who alleged that her husband, pastor Bipin Naik, was attacked and publicly humiliated by a mob in the Parjang police station area.

Dhenkanal Superintendent of Police Abhinav Sonkar said the man was allegedly beaten, garlanded with footwear and paraded through the village over claims that he had converted people to another religion.

"Based on the complaint lodged by pastor Bipin Naik's wife, we have detained four people after examining several individuals. A case has been filed under various sections of the BNS," Sonkar said. As per the complaint, 15 to 20 people armed with bamboo sticks stormed the house while Naik was praying. He was also allegedly forced to bow before a temple. *—PTI*

DCP Abhinav Sonkar **PHOTO: PTI**

- The action followed a complaint by the victim's wife, who alleged that her husband was attacked and publicly humiliated by a mob

PUBLIC MONEY WASTED, AGAIN

A newly built overhead water tank in Gujarat's Surat district collapsed during a routine test on Friday, injuring three labourers and raising fresh questions about the quality of public infrastructure projects. The 15-metre-high structure in Tadkeshwar village was built at a cost of Rs 21 crore. Part of the Gaypagla Group Water Supply Scheme to supply drinking water to 33 villages, the reservoir was designed to hold 11 lakh litres of water. It gave way while containing about 9 lakh litres during a trial run. Seven people were arrested on Thursday

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Kumar's acquittal shatters kin of 1984 riot victims

A daughter who watched her father being set on fire, a wife widowed in her youth, and a man who lost his loved ones in the 1984 riots... they all stood outside a Delhi court on Thursday, carrying the weight of their grief that has lingered for four decades.

Justice has been long, exhausting, and cruelly unfulfilled, the families said following the acquittal of former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a case related to alleged incitement of violence in the Janakpuri and Vikaspuri areas during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

Despite this acquittal, Kumar remains in prison, having been sentenced to life imprisonment in other riot-related murder cases.

Standing outside the courtroom, Nirmal Kaur recounted a childhood scorched by flames.

"My father was burnt alive before my eyes, and I have spent 42 years moving from one court to another, clinging to the belief that justice would one day arrive," she told PTI, crying for justice.

She added that her family was destroyed that day, saying, "I myself was destroyed, and every good thing in my life was taken away." Even now, she lamented that justice remained out of reach after decades of hope.

Beside her stood another woman, her voice shaking with rage and despair. She declared that the man she held responsible must be punished and hanged, warning that if this did not happen, they would remain outside the court, even if it meant dying there — they had nothing left to lose.

Wazir Singh, another family member of a riot victim, said that Kumar had faced around 18 murder cases yet had been let off. "He was responsible for the killing of thousands of Sikhs, and families like mine have spent their entire lives moving in and out of courtrooms," Singh said.

He asserted that if justice remained denied, they were ready to appeal to the high court and even the Supreme Court, expressing that they were no longer afraid to fight.

1984 Sikh massacre were a series of organised pogroms against Sikhs following the assassination of then prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards ***PHOTO: PTI***

Former Congress MP and accused Sajjan Kumar ***PHOTO: PTI***

For Bagi Kaur, the memories of the riots are still unbearable and vivid.

"Ten members of my family were killed. I vividly remember that during the riots, the roads were littered with corpses. One had to jump over dead bodies to cross the road," she recounted.

She described witnessing her family's dreams being destroyed and mentioned that not a single day had passed in all these years when she missed a court hearing, regardless of the circumstances.

"Our pain has now been completely disregarded. Satwant Singh was hanged; then why is the man responsible for the deaths of about a thousand people still alive?" Kaur questioned.

Sharing her 42-year journey for justice, she noted that everyone in the court knew whose widow she was, yet no one seemed willing to hear her cries.

Outside the court, the protesters refused to leave, their cries echoing through the area long after the verdict was pronounced.

For these families, the verdict was not merely a legal decision but another reopening of wounds that have never healed — lives lost, childhoods stolen, and grief carried for over 40 years.

They insisted that their struggle for justice was far from over and vowed to keep returning to the courts in search of justice. *—PTI*

SALAR

Fresh counselling gives relief to 50 J&K medicos

In a major relief for the 50 students affected by the revocation of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence, the Jammu and Kashmir Board of Professional Entrance Examinations has set 24 January as the fresh date for their counselling to adjust them in seven government-run colleges across the Union Territory.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the government has resolved the college allocation issue for the selected MBBS candidates of the medical college.

According to a notification issued by the controller of examinations of the BOPEE, Prof Gurvinder Raj Verma, the 50 supernumerary seats shall be distributed strictly based on the NEET-UG merit of the candidates concerned and their preferences among the seven newly established government medical colleges.

The notification said eight students would be allotted seats in GMC Anantnag and seven each in GMC Baramulla, Doda, Handwara, Kathua, Rajouri and Udhampur.

The Board has scheduled the counselling for 24 January at its offices in the twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu. It asked the candidates who are unable to attend the session in person to authorise a blood relative, in the format prescribed by the Board, to participate on their behalf. It asserted that the representative must carry the authorisation letter and a valid ID, including an Aadhaar Card.

Supernumerary seats are extra, additional seats created in educational programs beyond the normal intake, often to ensure representation for specific groups.

Earlier this month, the National Medical Commission's Medical Assessment and Rating Board withdrew the letter of permission granted to SMVDIME for non-compliance with minimum standards.

It had said that those admitted to the college during the counselling shall be accommodated in other institutions in Jammu and Kashmir as supernumerary seats.

Sangharsh Samiti, a recently formed conglomerate of right-wing organisations backed by the BJP, has been spearheading an agitation in Jammu since November last year, demanding cancellation of admissions to the college and seeking reservation of seats exclusively for students professing faith in Mata Vaishno Devi.

The Board had earlier said it cannot conduct fresh counselling for MBBS admissions and that the allocation of supernumerary seats to those who were admitted to the SMVDIME should be decided at the government level.

The clarification came in a letter to the Union Territory's Health and Medical Education Department, which sought its intervention in the relocation of students of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME).

In a letter to the Jammu and Kashmir Health and Medical Education Department on Wednesday, an under-secretary level officer of the Board said, "I am directed to submit that the matter was placed before the Board for detailed deliberations and it has observed that it is constrained to conduct any new counselling for the year 2025-26 as it is not mandated go beyond the counselling schedule issued by Medical Counselling Committee (MCC), MoHFW, New Delhi for current academic session."

It said that under the directions of the MCC, the data of 1,410 MBBS candidates, including 50 candidates of the SMVDIME under question, has been updated on their portal on the last date of joining on 31 December, 2025.

"Further, the creation and allotment of supernumerary seats does not fall within the ambit of J-K BOPEE."

Therefore, the fresh allocation of supernumerary seats to these candidates who were earlier allotted SMVDIME be made at the government level in consultation with the National Medical Commission and respective medical colleges in Jammu and Kashmir, the letter said.

Among the inaugural batch of 50 students at the SMVDIME, 42 were Muslims - mostly from Kashmir - along with seven Hindu students from Jammu and one Sikh candidate, a composition that triggered demands for scrapping the admissions and reserving all seats for Hindu students.

On 8 January, the Chief Minister asserted that the education of the 50 students will not be allowed to suffer, and his government will accommodate them in other institutions through supernumerary seats.

"It is our legal responsibility to accommodate them. We will adjust them by creating supernumerary seats in colleges close to their homes so that their education does not suffer," he had said. *—PTI*

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the government has resolved the college allocation issue for the selected MBBS candidates of the medical college ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Trump's Europe threats risk long-term US relations

- Barely a month into his presidency, Joe Biden had a message for Europe. "America is back," Biden told the Munich Security Conference in 2021. "The transatlantic alliance is back." It was a promise Biden delivered often as he sought to cast the disruptions of his predecessor, Donald Trump, as an anomaly. But nearly five years later, Biden's assurances have proven short-lived.

Barely a month into his presidency, Joe Biden had a message for Europe.

"America is back," Biden told the Munich Security Conference in 2021. "The transatlantic alliance is back."

It was a promise Biden delivered often as he sought to cast the disruptions of his predecessor, Donald Trump, as an anomaly. But nearly five years later, Biden's assurances have proven short-lived.

In his second term, Trump has cast aside alliances forged over seven decades with Europe that helped lead to the reunification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He has hectored leaders, making demands and levelling accusations more commonly associated with enemies. In the process, he has rocked the stability that has sustained the relationships and left countries to chart a course without US leadership.

The most stark example of this shift has been Trump's threat to take over Greenland, dismissing the nation as a large "piece of ice" as he demanded that Denmark cede control to the US, a move that could have caused NATO to rupture.

He called Denmark, which had the highest per capita death toll among coalition forces in Afghanistan, "ungrateful" for US protection during World War II. He posted private text messages that showed European leaders trying to court him. Trump shared images of himself planting the US flag in Greenland and, in an extraordinary speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, said Europe was "not heading in the right direction". At one point, he said that "sometimes you need a dictator".

Then, hours later, he announced a "framework of a future deal" on Arctic security. Following a long pattern, however, he offered scant details.

US President Donald Trump threatened Europe yet again at the World Economic Forum in Davos ***PHOTO: PTI***

An uncertain standing for the US in the world

Though Trump has, for now, backed away from his most potent threats to obtain Greenland, the episode has left America's standing in the world uncertain.

NATO leaders already were responding to Trump's threats by signalling strategies that don't include the US. That could make it much harder for the next president — whether they are a Democrat or Republican — to attempt the same type of reputational repair that Biden sought.

"To an extent, things can be improved," said Jon Finer, who was Biden's deputy national security adviser and is now a distinguished senior fellow at the Centre for American Progress. "But they will never be the same."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who parried Trump's gambit to make Canada the 51st state, has already set out on a more independent path.

Unable to reach a deal with Trump to cut tariffs, Carney was in Beijing last week meeting with President Xi Jinping and brokering a deal that cut levies on Chinese electric cars in return for lower tariffs on certain agricultural and food products.

Over the weekend, the European Union and the Mercosur bloc of South American countries formally signed a long-sought free trade agreement, which European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen portrayed as a bulwark against the Trump administration. EU lawmakers narrowly voted on Wednesday to hold up the deal for now.

European leaders were unsparing

Ahead of Trump's appearance in Davos, European leaders were unsparing, using language that until recently would have been unthinkable in relation to a dispute with the US French President Emmanuel Macron cautioned against colonial adventures, warning of "a shift towards a world without rules".

Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever said, "so many red lines have been crossed," adding, "being a happy vassal is one thing. Being a miserable slave is something else. If you back down now, you're going to lose your dignity."

This moment was also notable for the criticism of Trump from longtime allies on the right. In the UK, Nigel Farage said he understood the security issues Trump was raising in the Arctic. But he added that Trump's approach amounted to the "biggest fracture" in the transatlantic relationship in decades.

Jordan Bardella, president of Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party in France and a European Parliament lawmaker, posted that the EU should suspend last year's tariff deal with the US.

Trump mostly has support from the GOP in Congress

Congressional Republicans so far have largely supported Trump — or stayed silent.

The most pointed concerns from inside the GOP have largely come from those who aren't running for re-election this year, including Rep Don Bacon of Nebraska, who said on Wednesday that "all of this has been totally unnecessary".

Rep Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said it "may take some time" for a future president to rebuild trust with allies.

Allies will "continue to hold their breath until you have two consecutive elections when we know we have a president that is going to stick by our institutions," he said. "Everybody's just looking at us now as a nation and trying to see where we will be."*—PTI*

Don launches Board of Peace, key allies absent

59 countries have signed onto the board

President Donald Trump, centre, holds up a signed Board of Peace charter during the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland *PHOTO: PTI*

DAVOS, 22 JAN

President Donald Trump on Thursday signed the charter of the 'Board of Peace', which he touts to be a body to resolve international conflicts.

He claimed "everyone wants to be a part" of the body to rival the United Nations. However, many US allies opted not to participate.

In a speech at the World Economic Forum, Trump announced that 59 countries had signed onto the board — even though heads of state, top diplomats and other officials from only 19 countries, plus the US, attended.

The board was initially envisioned as a small group of world leaders overseeing the ceasefire to map out a future for the war-torn Gaza Strip.

India was among the countries absent. Sources said New Delhi is yet to decide. India continues to advocate a "two-State solution" for Israel and Palestine.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that some countries' leaders have indicated they plan to join but still require approval from their parliaments.

President Vladimir Putin will discuss a proposal to allocate USD 1 billion for humanitarian aid through the Board during upcoming talks with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Deploying these funds requires the US to unblock currently frozen assets.

Britain's foreign secretary, Yvette Cooper, said her country wasn't signing on "because this is about a legal treaty that raises much broader issues".

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif joined the board.

Norway and Sweden said they won't participate, following France. French officials support the Gaza peace plan but worry the board could replace the UN as the main conflict-resolution venue

Canada, Ukraine, China and the executive arm of the European Union have also not committed. Trump calling off the steep tariffs he threatened over Greenland could ease some allies' reluctance. *—PTI*

WAR HAS TO END: TRUMP AFTER MEETING ZELENSKYY

DAVOS, 22 JAN

US President Donald Trump on Thursday said he had a good meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and his message to Russian President Vladimir Putin is that "war has to end".

Zelenskyy said he had a positive meeting with Trump.

He said the US delegation will also meet an Ukrainian team separately, in addition to their meeting with Putin and later a trilateral meeting is expected in UAE between teams of the US, Russia and Ukraine either on Friday or Saturday.

His special envoy Steve Witkoff was expected to travel to Moscow later today to meet Putin and discuss plans to end the war.

Trump said that he was 'reasonably close' to a deal on stopping the Russia-Ukraine war, He has been trying to get Zelenskyy and Putin to agree to terms to end their nearly four-year-old war.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy announced two days of trilateral meetings between the US, Ukraine and Russia in the Emirates starting Friday. The trilateral meetings will follow the American negotiating team's visit to Moscow the day before. *—PTI*

Trump cancels tariff threats on Europe over Greenland

DAVOS, 22 JAN

President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday that he was scrapping his planned tariffs on eight European nations in an effort to force US control over Greenland.

The dramatic reversal announced on his Truth Social comes shortly after he told global leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos that he wanted the "including right, title and ownership" of the island.

Trump earlier met Mark Rutte, where the NATO head assured him that Europe and NATO would always come to Washington's defence if needed, after Trump claimed that the "weak" allies would not commit.

Following the meeting, Trump announced that a "framework of a future deal" had been reached, and that "additional discussions" on Greenland were being held concerning the Golden Dome missile defence programme, a multilayered, USD 175 billion system that for the first time will put US weapons in space.

He later told press that "we're going to have even better security than we would have had before".

- Donald Trump announced that a "framework of a future deal" had been reached, and that "additional discussions" on Greenland were being held

The tariffs on were to take effect at 10 per cent on 1 February and climb to 25 per cent in June.

NATO spokeswoman Allison Hart said that the framework included joint cooperation with allies to ensure "Russia and China never gain a foothold, economically or militarily, in Greenland." *—Agencies*

Greenland publishes 'crisis' handbook

Greenland's government published a handbook on what to do in a crisis. It urges residents to ensure they have sufficient food, water, fuel and supplies at home to survive for five days. The handbook also lists "hunting weapons, ammunition and fishing equipment" among the recommended items.

US seeking regime change in Cuba by year end: Report

The US aims to remove Cuba's leadership by the year's end, WSJ reported. It wants to "push out the Communist regime" and seek contacts in Havana. Officials said that the Venezuelan strikes where Washington Nicolás Maduro set the "blueprint" for future action.

Fukushima nuclear plant restart paused

TOKYO, 22 JAN

The restart of the world's largest nuclear power plant was suspended on Thursday, only hours after it resumed for the first time since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. The restart of the No. 6 reactor at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in north-central Japan was suspended due to a glitch in control rods, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings (TEPCO) said. There was no safety issue from the glitch. All seven reactors at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa have been dormant for a year after the meltdowns of reactors at the Fukushima plant contaminated the surrounding land with severe radioactive fallout. TEPCO is cleaning the Fukushima site. *—PTI*

Filipino scribe found guilty of 'financing terror'

MANILA, 22 JAN

A Philippine court on Thursday found a local journalist guilty of financing terrorism, which was condemned by press freedom watchdogs but welcomed by anti-communist insurgency officials. The court convicted Frenchie Mae Cumpio and human rights missionary Marielle Domequil — who have been jailed for nearly six years. They were acquitted on separate charges of illegally possessing firearms and explosives and sentenced to 12 to 18 years. Cumpio and Domequil were accused of providing financial support to New People's Army communist insurgents in Samar. Reporters Without Borders and allied organisations condemned the convictions as a "clear miscarriage of justice." *—PTI*

Putin willing to join Board of Peace with $1B frozen assets

MOSCOW, 22 JAN

- After Russia launched its all-out invasion of Ukraine in 2022, dozens of countries froze an estimated €300 billion worth of Moscow's assets.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was willing to furnish $1 billion in frozen Russian assets in the US to join President Donald Trump's 'Board of Peace', which is aimed at overseeing Gaza.

Countries that commit the sum would secure permanent seats on the board, while those that do not will have a three-year term on the Board.

During his remarks on Wednesday at the national Security Council meeting, Putin stressed the importance of ensuring that "the entire process should have a positive impact on a long-term settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the relevant decisions of the UN".

Trump had earlier said that the Board could replace the UN.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, dozens of countries froze an estimated 300 billion euros of Moscow's assets abroad.

FROZEN ASSETS FOR UKRAINE

Putin also indicated that Russia was willing to use the "remaining frozen assets in the US" to help rebuild Ukraine after a peace treaty is concluded. He is set to meet American envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner later on Thursday.

GREENLAND NOT OUR CONCERN

Putin said that who owns Greenland is Russia's concern, but added that Denmark has always treated the mineral-rich island as a "colony".

He recalled that Russia in 1867 sold Alaska to the US for $7.2 million, and that Denmark in 1917 sold the Virgin Islands to Washington.

Buying Greenland from Denmark should therefore cost around $1 billion, Putin said, accounting for inflation. Washington can afford this, he said. *—Agencies*

Campaign begins for Bangladesh's first election after Hasina ouster

DHAKA, 22 JAN

Campaigning began on Thursday for Bangladesh's first national elections since the 2024 uprising that ousted longtime prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Major political parties held rallies in Dhaka and other cities ahead of the 12 February vote, described as the most consequential in the country's history. The election will also see voters decide on proposed political reforms.

The interim government, led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, has pledged a free and fair election, but questions were raised after his administration banned Hasina's former ruling Awami League party. The Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have historically dominated the electorate.

Vote campaign in Dhaka on behalf of BNP Chairman *PHOTO: X*

Yunus took office three days after Hasina left for India on 5 August 2024, following a violent crackdown that killed hundreds of protesters.

With the Awami League excluded, a 10-party alliance led by Jamaat-e-Islami is seeking to expand its influence. Tarique Rahman, BNP chairman and son of late former PM Khaleda Zia, is seen as a leading contender.

The election includes a referendum on the July National Charter, designed to check on power, term limits, and anti-corruption. *—PTI*

ICE gets total powers to enter homes

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

A memo from the internal Immigration and Customs Enforcement department says that federal immigration officers are asserting sweeping power to forcibly enter people's homes without a judge's warrant, marking a sharp reversal of longstanding guidance meant to respect constitutional limits on government searches.

The memo, which has been obtained by the Associated Press, authorises ICE officers to use force to enter a residence based solely on an administrative warrant to arrest someone with a final order of removal, a move that advocates say collides with Fourth Amendment protections and upends years of advice given to immigrant communities.

Meanwhile, ICE officials are said to have detained a five-year-old Minnesota boy on Tuesday as he returned home from school and transported him and his father to a Texas detention center, according to school officials.

Liam Ramos, a preschooler, and his father were taken into custody while in their driveway, the superintendent of the school district in Columbia Heights, a Minneapolis suburb, said at a press conference on Wednesday. Liam is one of four children in the school district who have been detained by federal immigration agents during the Trump administration's enforcement surge in the region over the last two weeks, the district said. *—PTI*

Australia shooting: 3 dead, 1 wounded

MELBOURNE, 22 JAN

Three people were killed, and another was wounded on Thursday in a shooting in a town in Australia's New South Wales state, police said.

Emergency services were called to an address at Lake Cargelligo, a town of around 1,500 people, following reports of a shooting, a police statement said.

Three people — two women and a man — were dead, and another man was taken to the hospital in serious but stable condition, police said.

The shooter or shooters appeared to be at large.

Police used geo-targeted text messages to urge the public to avoid the area and for local residents to stay inside and contacted.

Local resident Manisha, who did not want to give her family name, told Sydney's The Daily Telegraph newspaper there were police cars and ambulances "all over town."

The shooting comes on a National Day of Mourning as Australia remembers the 15 people shot dead in Sydney at a Hanukkah celebration on 14 December. *—PTI*

Manhunt was underway in New South Wales, Australia, after three were shot dead in Lake Cargelligo *PHOTO: X*

IRAN REPORTS 3,117 DEATHS IN 1ST OFFICIAL TOLL

DUBAI, 22 JAN

Iranian state media released their first official death toll on Wednesday, reporting that 3,117 people died during the nationwide protests, which began on 28 December in Iran.

State television carried statements by the Interior Ministry and the Martyrs Foundation, saying 2,427 of the dead were civilians and security forces. It did not elaborate on the rest.

However, the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency has said the death toll is at least 4,560. The agency has been accurate throughout the years, relying on activists inside the country.

Last week, Iran shut its airspace, likely in anticipation of a strike following President Donald Trump's military threat against Iran following its violent crackdown on protesters.

Tensions escalated as the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group transited the Strait of Malacca, reportedly heading "dark" toward the Middle East.

While US officials haven't confirmed the destination, the group's westward heading puts it days from Iran. *—PTI*

FOR SKIPPING DEPOSITIONS

Epstein case: Clintons to face contempt vote

WASHINGTON, 22 JAN

House Republicans on Wednesday advanced a resolution to hold former US president Bill Clinton and his wife, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton in contempt of Congress in connection with Jeffrey Epstein.

Rep James Comer, the chairman, initiated the proceedings after the Clintons refused for months to comply with committee subpoenas for their testimony regarding the late convicted sex trafficker. The Clintons argue that the subpoenas are invalid, claiming they lack legislative purpose.

The advancement follows approval by the House Oversight Committee to recommend contempt charges. Last week, the Clintons released a letter criticising Comer amid the Justice Department being a month behind the deadline to release its complete Epstein case files.

Former US president Bill Clinton and his wife, former secretary of state Hillary in contempt of Congress in connection *PHOTO: X*

The repercussions of the contempt charges loom large, given the possibility of fines and incarceration.

Epstein allegedly died by suicide in 2019 in a New York jail while awaiting trial. His former girlfriend and co-accused, Ghislaine Maxwell is currently incarcerated at the Federal Prison Camp in Texas, where she is serving a sentence of up to 20 years. She has agreed to testify under oath before the congressional committee.

Comer said Maxwell will be deposed virtually on 9 February.

Comer alleged that the Clinton family "had a close relationship" with Epstein and Maxwell, highlighting Clinton's admitted plane trips on Epstein's jet. He also claimed that Clinton had received massages from of Epstein's victims. Publicly released case files have detailed Epstein's connections to Bill Clinton and Donald Trump, among many other powerful figures. *—PTI*

THE OSCAR NOMINATIONS ARE...

The 98th Academy Awards are scheduled for March 16, at 7.30 am IST. Conan O'Brien will return as host for the second time.

BEST DIRECTOR

- Paul Thomas Anderson (One Battle After Another)
- Josh Safdie (Marty Supreme)
- Ryan Coogler (Sinners)
- Joachim Trier (Sentimental Value)
- Chloé Zhao (Hamnet)

BEST ACTOR

- Leonardo DiCaprio
- Timothée Chalamet
- Michael B Jordan
- Ethan Hawke
- Wagner Moura

BEST ACTRESS

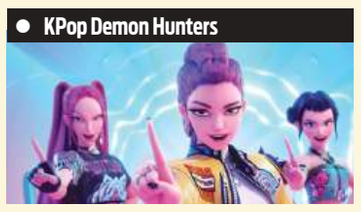
- Rose Byrne
- Kate Hudson
- Emma Stone
- Renate Reinsve
- Jessie Buckley

BEST SCREENPLAY

- Robert Kaplow
- Bronstein & Josh Safdie
- Ryan Coogler
- Eskil Vogt, Joachim Trier
- Jafar Panahi

ANIMATED FEATURE

- Arco
- Elio
- Little Amélie or the Character of Rain
- Zootopia 2
- KPop Demon Hunters



INTERNATIONAL FEATURE

- The Secret Agent, Brazil
- It Was Just an Accident, France
- Sentimental Value, Norway
- Sirat, Spain
- The Voice of Hind Rajab, Tunisia

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold, silver decline from record as global rally eases

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Gold and silver prices retreated from record highs in the national capital on Thursday as investors turned to profit-booking amid subdued global cues and easing demand for safe-haven assets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity declined by Rs 2,500, or 1.56 per cent, to Rs 1,57,200 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday, after closing at the highest-ever level of Rs 1,59,700 per 10g in the previous session. Silver ended its unprecedented nine-day rally, tumbling by Rs 14,300, or 4.3 per cent, to Rs 3,20,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from the previous close of Rs 3,34,300 per kg. —*PTI*

Rupee recovers to settle at 91.62 against USD

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

The rupee rebounded marginally from its all-time low levels and gained 3 paise to close at 91.62 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, on suspected RBI intervention and a positive trend in domestic equities. Forex traders said comments from US President Donald Trump at Davos helped shift sentiment, as he confirmed that a framework for a future Greenland agreement has been reached and that tariffs scheduled for 1 February would not be implemented. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.54 then gained ground to touch an intraday high of 91.48 against the greenback. It touched a low of 91.68 before settling for the day at 91.62 (provisional), up 3 paise from its all-time low levels. —*PTI*

Razorpay POS gets RBI nod for aggregator licence

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Fintech major Razorpay's offline payments arm, Razorpay POS, on Thursday said it has secured licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to act as an offline payment aggregator. With this authorisation, Razorpay now holds all three key RBI licences—online payment aggregator, cross-border payment aggregator, and offline payment aggregator, according to a company statement. The PA-P licence will allow Razorpay POS to further scale its in-store payment infrastructure, supporting high-volume transactions for diverse sectors ranging from large retail chains to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The company, which entered the offline space following the acquisition of Ezetap in August 2022, currently offers a suite of hardware, including Android Smart POS, magnetic stripe POS, and soundbox devices. —*PTI*

Waaree Energies Q3 profit doubles to Rs 1,106 crore

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Waaree Energies' consolidated net profit has more than doubled to Rs 1,106.79 crore in the December quarter, driven by increased revenues from solar modules and EPC businesses. In an exchange filing, the company said its net profit was at Rs 506.88 crore in the October-December period of the preceding 2024-25 fiscal. Waaree Energies has reported total income of Rs 7,761.23 crore in the third quarter, nearly double of Rs 3,545.27 crore in the same period a year ago, the filing showed on Wednesday. Sharing segment-wise numbers, the company said it earned a revenue of Rs 6,989.56 from the solar photovoltaic module business, as against Rs 3,109.29 crore a year ago. —*PTI*

Markets rebound after 3 straight days of falling

Sensex climbs 397.74 pts, while Nifty surges 132.40 pts

MUMBAI, 22 JAN

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Thursday after three sessions of losses, tracking gains in global markets after US President Donald Trump struck a conciliatory tone on Greenland and hinted at a good trade deal with India.

Besides, a mild recovery in the rupee and a correction in global crude prices supported the domestic markets, traders said.

In a volatile session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 397.74 points, or 0.49 per cent, to close at 82,307.37. During the day, the benchmark surged by 873.55 points, or 1.06 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 82,783.18, but failed to sustain higher levels due to selling pressure at elevated levels.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rose 132.40 points, or 0.53 per cent, to settle at 25,289.90. In the intraday session, the index appreciated by 278.25 points, or 1.10 per cent, to hit a high of 25,435.75. The trend clearly showed weak follow-through buying at higher zones.

Among the 30 Sensex constituents, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, Power Grid, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Kotak Mahindra Bank, IndiGo, Hindustan Unilever, HCL Technologies and NTPC were the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge rose 1.28 per cent, and the smallcap index went up by 1.13 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, PSU Bank rose the most by 2.43 per cent, followed by Capital Goods by 2.03 per cent, Industrials by 1.78 per cent, Utilities by 1.57 per cent, Services by 1.45 per cent, Power by 1.43 per cent, Metal by 1.34 per cent, FMCG by 1.22 per cent, Commodities by 1.15 per cent, and Healthcare by 1.11 per cent. —*PTI*

WALMART, TIGER & MICROSOFT

PhonePe $1.5B IPO: 3 major firms to offload stakes

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Walmart will trim its stake in PhonePe by about 12 per cent, while other backers such as Microsoft and Tiger Global will offload all their holdings in the digital payments company's IPO, touted as India's biggest since October.

The total shares to be offloaded through the OFS are valued at around Rs 10,115.87 crore based on the weighted-average cost of acquisition per equity share.

Bengaluru-based PhonePe plans to sell 5.07 crore shares, entirely by existing shareholders, with no additional capital, according to an updated draft prospectus filed to market regulator.

The offering may raise up to USD 1.5 billion, valuing the company at about USD 15 billion. This will be the biggest initial public offering (IPO) since Tata Capital's USD 1.7 billion share sale in October.

PhonePe, which competes with Google Pay and Paytm, aims to list by mid-2026.

Walmart, which holds 71.77 per cent in PhonePe through its entity WM Digital Commerce Holdings, plans to sell as many as 4.59 crore shares, representing about 9 per cent of the company.

Smaller shareholders, Tiger Global and Microsoft, are fully exiting their stakes, according to the updated draft red herring prospectus.

Tiger Global, which first invested in PhonePe in 2021 after Walmart carved out the payments business from Flipkart India as a separate entity, will sell 10.39 lakh shares. Microsoft Global Finance plans to offload 36.78 lakh shares. —*PTI*

Air India faces record loss of $1.6B

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Air India is set to report a record annual loss after last year's deadly crash and airspace shutdowns following Operation Sindoor.

According to sources speaking on conditions of anonymity, the national carrier which owned by the Tata Group in collaboration with the Singapore Airlines is suffering a loss of 150 billion rupees ($1.6 billion) for the year ending 31 March 2026.

The airlines' earnings were further hit by Pakistan's closure of its airspace for Indian airlines after Operation Sindoor forcing carriers to fly longer routes at higher costs to Europe and the US.

The development has hit Air India hard because the airline had been edging back toward profitability before the June Dreamliner crash — which killed more than 240 people — thereby undoing years of progress towards building a reliable brand.

The founders had targeted operational break-even this fiscal year, but profitability is now out of reach, sources have said.

2025 has been a rather turbulent year for Indian aviation marked by crashes, airspace closures, flight delays and mass cancellations.

The imbroglio with Indigo Airlines in December has further put the spotlight on Air India and its ability to deliver.

Meanwhile, Singapore Airlines Ltd., which took a 25.1 per cent stake after merging Vistara with Air India in 2024, has seen its own earnings dragged down by the carrier's performance even as it helps Air India bring aircraft maintenance in-house as part of a restructuring plan. —*PTI*

IndiGo Q3 profit plunges 78% to Rs 549 crore

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

India's largest airline IndiGo on Thursday reported a 78 per cent decline in December quarter net profit at Rs 549.1 crore as flight disruptions and implementation of the new labour code took a toll on its earnings.

The airline reported a net profit of Rs 549.1 crore in the October-December quarter, compared with Rs 2,448.8 crore earnings in the year-ago period, according to a company statement. The company said it took a hit of Rs 1,546.5 crore in the third quarter. This included Rs 577.2 crore due to massive flight disruptions witnessed during early December and another Rs 969.3 crore on account of the implementation of new labour laws.

IndiGo was slapped with a fine of Rs 22.2 crore for the flight disruptions, which it has accounted for in exceptional items.

"Despite these operational disruptions, IndiGo delivered a topline of around 245 billion rupees in the December quarter, reflecting a growth of around 7 per cent with a reported profit of around 5 billion rupees and an underlying profit excluding exceptional items and forex of 31 billion rupees," Elbers said. —*PTI*

'₹2.5L cr Andhra deals inked in 2025 grounded'

AMARAVATI, 22 JAN

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday said investment pledges worth Rs 2.5 lakh crore inked during the 2025 edition of the WEF have been grounded.

The chief minister disclosed this information at the 2026 World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland during an interaction with Tata Group chairman N Chandrasekaran, an official release said.

"Rs 2.5 lakh crore worth investments from the negotiations held during 2025 Davos visit have been grounded," Naidu said in the release.

Observing that the WEF is a great platform to learn about global industrial trends, the CM said the visit to Davos will come handy to brand Andhra Pradesh and to gauge new policies in the market.

In three days at Davos, Naidu said the success achieved in the fields of green energy, technology, Artificial Intelligence, agriculture and tourism were showcased.

Unlike earlier, the CM noted that top companies are more interested in India nowadays.

Youth, strong leadership and policies are the factors driving the establishment of companies in every sector in Andhra Pradesh, he said in the release.

Meanwhile, Chandrasekaran said special executives from Tata Trusts will be sent to Ratan Tata Innovation Hub in the state for implementing its programmes and for further deliberations.

He also requested Chandrasekaran to consider investing in the three sports cities the southern state is planning to build. —*PTI*

Gates, OpenAI launch $50M AI Pilot for Africa

The Gates Foundation and OpenAI announced a $50 million pilot, Horizon 1000, to implement AI in 1,000 African primary healthcare clinics by 2028, starting in Rwanda.

AI tools will aid diagnosis, streamline administrative tasks, forecast disease and medicine needs, and support 60,000-plus community health workers.

Gates said the goal is to double healthcare efficiency, while OpenAI CEO Sam Altman called AI a "societal marvel" improving lives. —*Agencies*

T'gana and WEF to partner for 'Telangana Rising 2047' vision

The World Economic Forum has expressed its intent to partner with the Telangana government on its 'Telangana Rising 2047' vision. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy met Jeremy Jurgens, managing director of WEF and Manju George, head of Strategic Impact and Integration, Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Network in Davos and presented the vision and the roadmap and strategy being implemented towards reaching the goal of becoming a USD 3 trillion economy. Jurgens said the vision open up opportunities for mutual cooperation. —*PTI*

Telangana launches Aikam AI Innovation entity at WEF

At the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026, the Telangana government officially launched Aikam, its flagship autonomous, unified, and globally oriented AI innovation entity. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, state IT and Minister D Sridhar Babu and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy were present. Institutionalised to position Telangana among the world's Top 20 innovation hubs, Aikam is India's first-of-its-kind innovation entity built to translate AI ambition into real-world execution. It focuses on deep, symbiotic collaboration across global enterprises, research institutions and academia. —*PTI*

Shadowfax Technologies IPO subscribed 2.72 times

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

The initial public offering (IPO) of logistics services provider Shadowfax Technologies Ltd was subscribed by 2.72 times on the final day of bidding on Thursday.

The Rs 1,907-crore IPO received bids for 24,23,88,360 shares against 8,90,88,807 shares on offer, according to NSE data.

The portion meant for qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) fetched 3.81 times the subscription. The quota for retail individual investors (RIIs) was subscribed 2.31 times, and the category for non-institutional investors received 84 per cent bids.

The public issue of Shadowfax Technologies received 47 per cent subscription on the first day of bidding on Tuesday.

Shadowfax on Monday collected Rs 856 crore from anchor investors.

The price band was fixed at Rs 118-124 apiece for the IPO, valuing the company at over Rs 7,100 crore at the higher end.

The IPO had a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 1,000 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 907.27 crore by existing shareholders. This takes the total issue size to Rs 1,907.27 crore.

The company has proposed to utilise proceeds from the fresh issue towards enhancing capacity in terms of network infrastructure, funding of lease payments for new first-mile and last-mile, and sort centres, as well as towards branding, marketing, and communication initiatives, unidentified inorganic acquisitions, and general corporate purposes.

Shadowfax is backed by marquee investors such as Flipkart, TPG, Eight Roads Ventures, Mirae Asset Ventures and Nokia Growth Funds. —*PTI*

TO RS 3 LAKH CRORE

Industries seek double infra spending

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Industry leaders urged the government to double the allocation for various infrastructure projects to Rs 3 lakh crore in the forthcoming general Budget to boost overall economic growth.

Ahead of the general Budget, industry leaders from various sectors, including logistics, also demanded major infrastructure reforms and heavy budget allocation across diverse sectors, according to a statement by the Logistics Sector Skill Council (LSC).

A recent survey by the LSC highlighted the need for an infrastructure-focused budget aligned with the vision to position the country as a global economic powerhouse.

Building on last year's Rs 1.5 lakh crore allocation for interest-free loans to states and landmark investments in highways, urban transport, and smart cities, the expectations of industry leaders are running high for a potential doubling of this outlay, it stated.

The prospect of doubling infrastructure allocations, following years of transformative investment in highways, railways, and logistics corridors, can unlock robust supply-chain efficiency and global competitiveness, Ravikanth Yamarthy, CEO, Logistics Sector Skill Council said.

Industry leaders emphasised that sustained infrastructure planning is key to attracting investment, boosting competitiveness, and ensuring development benefits all regions.

The government's ongoing emphasis on infrastructure is seen as a driving force for unlocking new opportunities, enhancing the quality of life, and fuelling overall economic momentum.

A robust and future-ready infrastructure framework is also seen as the backbone for innovation, digital transformation, and sustainable progress across industries.

Stakeholders note that bold infrastructure reforms can help India realise its full economic potential and boost job creation. —*PTI*

Eternal stock up over 7% post Q3 result, Goyal's exit

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Eternal Ltd, the parent company of food delivery aggregator Zomato and quick commerce operator Blinkit, received its highest share price target from brokerage firm CLSA on Thursday. This comes after its third quarter results and its founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal stepping away from daily operations.

Shares opened gap up with a gain of 5.86 per cent at Rs 300 against the previous close of Rs 276 on the BSE. The stock hit an intraday high of Rs 304.20. This comes as the company reported a 72.88 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 102 crore for the December quarter of FY26, driven by revenue growth from its quick commerce operations.

A year ago, it saw a profit of Rs 59 crore.

- Shares opened gap up with a gain of 5.86 per cent at Rs 300 against the previous close of Rs 276 on the BSE.

In food delivery business, adjusted revenue increased 26.5 per cent YoY to Rs 3,053 crore in Q3 FY26.

Net order value (NOV) jumped 16.6 per cent YoY to Rs 9,846 crore. Goyal attributed the growth to a modest improvement in the demand environment. —*Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

Gill out for duck as Punjab, Saurashtra batters struggle

RAJKOT, 22 JAN

Shubman Gill's return to the Ranji Trophy ended in a two-ball duck as Saurashtra and Punjab batters struggled on a rank turner during the opening day of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group B match here on Thursday. Gill was trapped in front of the wicket by left-arm spinner Parth Bhut, and other Punjab batters too did not fare better against tweakers. Apart from Bhut, who took five wickets for 33 runs, veteran India spinner Ravindra Jadeja (2/48) and seasoned Dharmendra Jadeja (2/36) joined to wreck Punjab's innings, dismissing them for 139. The visitors conceded a first-innings lead of 33 runs after earlier bowling out Saurashtra for 172. For Punjab, left-arm spinners Harpreet Brar (6/38) and Prerit Dutta (1/32) combined well with off-spinner Jass Inder (2/71) to rock the Saurashtra line-up.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ton-up Sarfaraz, Lad power Mumbai to 332-4

HYDERABAD, 22 JAN

Sarfaraz Khan and Siddhesh Lad compiled superlative hundreds to power table-toppers Mumbai to a commanding 332 for 4 on day one of their Ranji Trophy match against Hyderabad, here on Thursday. Sarfaraz notched up his 17th first-class hundred and his first of the 2025-26 Ranji season, scoring 142 not out off 164 balls, which was studded with 11 hits to the fence and five maximums. Khare and Anustup Majumdar are the only two batters who have amassed more Ranji tons than Sarfaraz since the 2019-20 season. Lad sent the ball across the ropes 10 times and also had two sixes in his 179-ball knock to score 104.—*PTI*

Santosh Trophy 2025-26: Kerala beats Punjab

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Kerala pulled off a quick-fire comeback to begin the final round of Santosh Trophy 2025-26 with a 3-1 win over Punjab in Assam on Thursday. Kerala, the runner-up in the last edition of the tournament, scored three goals in seven minutes, including a brace by Muhammad Ajsal, to secure full points at the Silapathar Football Stadium. Kerala was forced on the backfoot when Jatinder Singh Rana found the net for Punjab in the 27th minute. Despite attempts to find a quick comeback, Punjab's closely-knit defence kept it ahead, going into the break.—*PTI*

Liverpool cruise as Bayern Munich reach CL last 16

LONDON, 22 JAN

Liverpool eased to a 3-0 win in Marseille in the Champions League on Wednesday night as Harry Kane's double earned Bayern Munich a 2-0 victory against Union Saint-Gilloise that secured a place in the last 16 for the German giants. Arne Slot's Liverpool extended their unbeaten run to 13 matches in all competitions since a 4-1 hammering at home by PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League in November. Mohamed Salah made his first appearance for his club since returning from the Africa Cup of Nations, but he was not among the scorers. Instead, it was Dominik Szoboszlai who got the breakthrough just before half-time with a clever free-kick that went under the wall.—*PTI*

India aim to make it 2-0 against New Zealand

Kiwi bowlers hope for better show against India

RAIPUR, 22 JAN

Sanju Samson would look to hit his straps in a much-needed settled role at the top of the order, while Ishan Kishan would be better served to make the limited opportunities count in the second T20 international between India and New Zealand here on Friday. Kiwi bowlers hope for a better show against the all-conquering Indian batting order. In and out of the playing eleven for no fault of his own, Samson is now certain to get an extended run ahead of next month's T20 World Cup.

Falling to a soft dismissal in the series opener, Samson would be determined to display his wide range of shots that have helped him rack up three hundreds in the shortest format. Another batter who needs to repay the faith of the team management is Kishan, a surprise inclusion in the World Cup squad, who played ahead of Shreyas Iyer in Nagpur on Wednesday night.

The southpaw looked good in his brief stay before being caught at cover. With batting till eight, most Indians players bat in top gear, trying to hit every ball out of the park. Kishan would continue with that fearless approach and can only hope that it pays off.

Indian cricketers Rinku Singh, Samson captain Suriya Kumar Yadav, and Ishan Kishan during a training session PHOTO: PTI

Focus has been on captain Suryakumar Yadav's form ahead of the ICC event, and even though he could not make a major contribution, the 32 off 22 balls would have lifted his confidence by a few notches.Despite the individual areas of improvement emerging from an emphatic win in the first T20, the performance as a team sent ominous signals to rivals ahead of the World Cup, where India go in as defending champions.—*PTI*

INDIA VS NEW ZEALAND T20I

INDIA vs NEW ZEALAND
Match starts in Raipur
@7 pm IST

HEAD TO HEAD RAIPUR

PLAYED:	25
INDIA WON:	14
NZ WON:	10
TIED	1

ICC satisfied with Eden Gardens

The International Cricket Council on Thursday "expressed satisfaction" with the facilities at the iconic Eden Gardens ahead of the Men's T20 World Cup, scheduled to be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka from 7

INDONESIA MASTERS

Sindhu, Lakshya enter quarterfinals

JAKARTA, 22 JAN

Top Indian shuttlers P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen entered the quarterfinals of the USD 500,000 Indonesia Masters badminton tournament after securing straight-game wins in their respective round-of-16 matches here on Thursday.

Lakshya, a 2021 world championships bronze medallist, prevailed over Hong Kong China's Jason Gunawan 21-10, 21-11 in a contest that lasted a little over half an hour.

The 24-year-old from Almora, who won the Australian Open last year, will meet Thailand's rising talent Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul, who knocked out Paris bronze medallist Lee Zii Jia of Malaysia.Sindhu, a two-time Olympic-medallist, notched up a 21-19, 21-18 triumph over familiar foe Line Hojmark Kjaerfeldt of Denmark in her pre-quarterfinal that took 43 minutes to wind up.

This was Sindhu's fifth win over the Dane in their six clashes so far.Sindhu will next be up against tournament top seed and world number four Chen Yu Fei of China in the Super 500 event.

Later in the day, former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth, a 2021 world championships silver medallist, was too erratic to pose any challenge, going down 11-21, 10-21 to Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen in a lop-sided pre-quarterfinals.In women's singles, Anmol Kharb showed a lot of heart to challenge former world champion Nozomi Okuhara before going down 21-16, 14-21, 11-21 in 56 minutes.

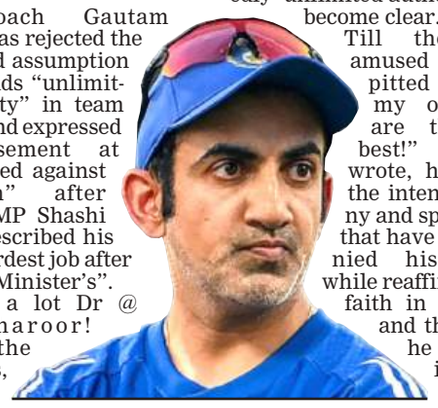
Men's doubles pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and M R Arjun, who secured several titles, including the Al Ain Masters and Turkiye International Challenge in 2025, produced a gallant fight before losing 17-21, 21-9, 16-21 to third-seeded and world number 6 Malaysians Man Wei and Kai Wun Tee in 54 minutes. —*PTI*

Truth & logic will become clear: Gambhir

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

India coach Gautam Gambhir has rejected the widely held assumption that he holds "unlimited authority" in team selection and expressed his amusement at being "pitted against his own" after Congress MP Shashi Tharoor described his role as "hardest job after the Prime Minister's".

"Thanks a lot Dr @ShashiTharoor! When the dust settles, truth & logic about a coach's supposedly 'unlimited authority' will become clear.



Till then, I'm amused at being pitted against my own who are the very best!" Gambhir wrote, hinting at the intense scrutiny and speculation that have accompanied his tenure while reaffirming his faith in the team and the system he is working with in.

Tharoor, an avid cricket fan himself, shared a selfie with Gambhir ahead of the first T20I against New Zealand in Nagpur and expressed his admiration for the manner in which the former India opener is performing in his current job despite the relentless scrutiny.

Gambhir responded late last night and fleetingly touched upon some of the chatter that has dominated his tenure. Thanks a lot Dr @ShashiTharoor! When the dust settles, truth & logic about a coach's supposedly "unlimited authority" will become clear. —*PTI*

WE WON'T PLAY IN INDIA

Hopeful of justice from ICC: B'desh

DHAKA, 22 JAN

Bangladesh on Thursday refused to send its national cricket team for the T20 World Cup in India, effectively paving the way for Scotland to take its place in the tournament roster after the ICC dismissed the country's demand for a change of venue.

Bangladesh had been served an ultimatum by the world body on Wednesday to either agree to travel to India or risk being replaced, as there was no credible threat to the safety of their players, officials, or fans there. The country was given time till Thursday to make its decision.

However, taking a defiant position, Bangladesh's sports advisor Asif Nazrul, after a meeting with national team players, announced that the ICC's position was not acceptable to them. "While our cricketers have worked hard to qualify for the World Cup, the security risk regarding playing in India remains unchanged. This concern is not based on abstract analysis," Nazrul said."We are not giving up hope yet; our team is ready. We expect the ICC to provide justice by considering our genuine security risks and allowing us to play in Sri Lanka," he added. —*PTI*

FORMER INDIA DEFENDER ILYAS PASHA IS DEAD, AIFF CONDOLES

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

Former India and East Bengal defender Ilyas Pasha died on Thursday after a prolonged illness.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters, and two sons. The All India Football Federation (AIFF) condoled the death of Pasha, who was one of the best footballers to have come out of Karnataka.

A committed and soft-spoken footballer, Pasha carved out a distinguished career in an area of the field that demanded resilience and composure — defence.

Primarily operating as a right wing-back, he was renowned for his impeccable sense of timing, calm demeanour, and ability to read the game astutely. Rarely flustered under pressure, Pasha's disciplined positioning and well-judged tackles ensured that opposing left wingers found little joy on his flank, while goalkeepers behind him operated with added confidence.

At the international level, Pasha made his senior India debut on January 27, 1987, against Bulgaria in the Nehru Cup at Kozhikode.

He went on to earn eight international caps, featuring in two editions of the Nehru Cup (1987 and 1991), the 1991 SAF Games, and the 1992 Asian Cup qualifiers.

Pasha began his football journey with Vinayaka Football Club, Vyalikaval, in north Bengaluru, where he also resided.

His consistent performances soon earned him a move to Indian Tele phone Industries in the mid-1980s, a period that marked his emergence at the national level. Working committee member Dipten Bose paid his respects, while former players Saravanan, Thomas and Feroz were also present. —*PTI*

Ilyas Pasha PHOTO: PTI

Djokovic one match away from 400 Grand Slam wins

MELBOURNE, 22 JAN

Novak Djokovic and Stan Wawrinka made it a day for the ages at the Australian Open on Thursday.

Djokovic improved to 399 wins in Grand Slam matches with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Francesco Maestrelli on Thursday, making the 38-year-old, 24-time major winner just one shy of becoming the first player ever to 400.He's aiming to win an unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title.

And if he does, he'll beat Ken Rosewall's record (aged 37 in 1972) as the oldest man in the Open era to win a major singles championship.The Rosewall name was prominent on Day 5 at Melbourne Park, where he was among the invited VIPs.

Stan Wawrinka

Wawrinka, at 40 years, 310 days, became the first man over 40 to reach the third round of a major since Rosewall in 1978. It took a 4 1/2-hour 4-6, 6-3, 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (3) comeback victory over 21-year-old qualifier Arthur Gea.

Swiatek sees off Bouzkova, faces Kalinskaya in third round

Iga Swiatek resumed her quest for a first Australian Open title and career Grand Slam with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over unseeded Marie Bouzkova to reach the third round on Thursday, as she showed no signs of the sluggishness that dogged her in the last round.

The 24-year-old arrived in Melbourne after two losses during Poland's triumphant United Cup run and had to fight past Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue in the last round, but normal service looked to have resumed against Bouzkova in John Cain Arena.

Imperious Sinner barrels into Round

Two-time reigning champion Jannik Sinner wasted no time in barreling into the Australian Open third round with a demolition of home player James Duckworth on Thursday.

The Italian second seed romped to a 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 victory in just one hour and 49 minutes against the shell-shocked wildcard at the Rod Laver Arena.

Sinner plays big-serving Eliot Spizzirri, the 85th-ranked American, next as he pursues a Melbourne Park hat-trick.

Naomi Osaka on Thursday defeated Sorana Cirstea 6-3, 4-6, 6-2 to advance to the third round of the 2026 Australian Open. The No. 16 seed started strongly, utilizing her powerful serve to claim the first set comfortably. However, Cirstea, playing in her final season on tour, displayed the veteran resilience that has defined her career. —*PTI*

Novak Djokovic PHOTO: PTI

TATA STEEL MASTERS

Gukesh beats Van, and Erigaisi suffers defeat

AMSTERDAM, 22 JAN

World Champion D. Gukesh registered his first win while top seed Arjun Erigaisi lost in the fifth round of the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk Aan Zee, Netherlands, on Wednesday.

After four straight draws, Gukesh got his maiden victory by taking down Czechia's Thai Dai Van Nguyen with black pieces. The result took Gukesh to within half a point of the leaders.

Erigaisi slipped to third as he went down to Slovenia's Vladimir Fedoseev.

Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov, who won last year's FIDE World Cup, joined USA's Hans Niemann and Uzbekistan's Nodirbek Abdusattorov at the top as he beat Turkiye's Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus. At the same time, Niemann and Abdusattorov played a draw against each other.

Reigning champion R. Praggnanandhaa's quest for a first win continued after he was held to a draw by Dutchman Anish Giri.

Aravindh Chithambaram, the fourth Indian in the 14-player field, lost to Germany's Vincent Keymer.

In the sixth round on Friday, Erigaisi faces Germany's Matthias Bluebaum, Gukesh will be up against Abdusattorov, Praggnanandhaa will take on Fedoseev, and Aravindh will play against Sindarov.

Round 5 Results (Indians unless specified)

Arjun Erigaisi (2.5) lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 3) Anish Giri (Ned, 1.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (1.5) Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 3) drew with Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 2.5) D. Gukesh (3) beat Thai Dai Van Nguyen (Cze, 1.5). —*PTI*

Tilottama tops 10m Air Rifle Women trials

NEW DELHI, 22 JAN

In-form shooter Tilottama Sen produced yet another solid show to secure the top spot in the T1 finals of the women's 10m Air Rifle event in the National Selection Trials, here on Thursday.

Shahu Tushar Mane of Railways won in the men's event, while Vijayveer Sidhu claimed top spot in 25m Rapid Fire Pistol T2 at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Tilottama, who produced a dominant showing in the 50m Rifle 3 Positions events earlier this week, demonstrated composure and control in the final.

Junior National Champion Tilottama entered the final as the eighth and last qualifier, having scraped through with a score of 630.8, but rose steadily to finish on top with 253.4.

Railway's shooter Sonam Uttam Maskar, who had qualified at the fifth spot with 631.2, mounted a strong challenge before settling for second place with 252.8 in the final.

Madhya Pradesh's Nupur Kumrawat with 230.5(631.2) claimed third place.

Shruti of Haryana, who led the qualification round with 633.2, finished in fifth place with 187.9. —*PTI*